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SERMONS ON THE SABBATH-DAY,

ON THE

CHARACTER OF THE WARRIOR,

AND ON

THE INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY.

111624

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PREFACE.

A CLERGYMAN, I conceive, has no right to avail himself of any temporary excitement, except for the purpose of enforcing or elucidating some permanent principle; he has no right to pass by any which he believes may minister to that end. To preach upon the 'Crystal Palace question' for the sake of adding one voice more to those who defend or who attack the measure which the directors of the Company have proposed, would have seemed to me a grievous abuse of my office and of the Sabbath-day. To use the controversy which that question has awakened as a means of urging my hearers to a more serious examination of the nature of the institution which they and their fathers have observed—to make the charges which are brought against others a reason for

asking ourselves how far our customary notions and practice are in accordance with its character and its object—seemed to me a duty which I could not safely neglect. It is a very painful thing to find ourselves at variance with those whose judgment and sincerity we wish to revere; but if we find from Scripture that the opinions which the religious public, in different periods, have formed on this subject, involve very serious moral and theological errors, the fear of differing with the good men around us is over-balanced by the greater fear of being at issue with the authority of the Lord of the Sabbath-day,—of Him by whose sentence they and we must be judged. If one person is led by the Sermons I am putting forth on this subject, to reverence a day which he has been used to dislike or to scorn, and to receive it and the book which testifies of it as the pledge of God's love for him and for the world, I shall have abundant compensation for any hard words which I may hear from those whose favourable opinion I should rejoice to win, if it could be

obtained by some smaller sacrifice than that of truth and honesty.

The more serious excitement produced by the funeral of the Duke of Wellington should not, I think, be suffered to evaporate in a vague feeling about the vanity or fragility of human greatness. I have endeavoured to show, in the sermon preached the Sunday after that event, that the greatness we deplore was not vain but substantial, and that the national unity which for that one day was realized, ought not to be fragile, since all morality and faith will perish when it perishes.

The fifth sermon in the volume was one of a course of weekly lectures delivered at the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields during the Great Exhibition of 1851. The subjects were selected, with much judgment, by the Vicar, for the purpose of connecting the thoughts respecting human skill and the fellowship of different nations which the Exhibition awakened, with the laws of God's universe, and with those which bind races and men together. The one upon which I preached

SERMON IV.

THE CHARACTER OF THE WARRIOR A LEGITIMATE OBJECT OF ADMIRATION TO CHRISTIANS.

ISAIAH ii. 4.

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And He shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more 78

SERMON V.

THE DIVINE INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY.

REVELATIONS v. 1—7.

And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo! in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne 99

SERMON I.

THE OLD TESTAMENT SABBATH.

Preached at Lincoln's Inn, Oct. 31, 1852.

EXODUS XX. 9—11: *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the Sabbath day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

YOU cannot be ignorant that the minds of many people in this city, I suppose in the country generally, are much excited by the opinion, that a company, apparently formed for a useful and benevolent purpose, is projecting an outrage on the sacredness of the Sabbath-day. Meetings are summoned to protest against the anticipated crime; resolutions are passed, declaring the very existence of the nation to be in danger; above all, we, the clergy, are conjured, in documents privately and publicly

circulated, if we value our own souls, and the souls of those who hear us, to testify that the law of God must not be set aside upon any pleas of temporary expediency. If I thought that the design which has called forth these fears and denunciations were as mischievous and evil as it is represented to be, I might not, perhaps, have felt myself bound to tell you so; for there are many immeasurably more powerful voices raised to enforce that conviction, and I fancy that a cause suffers, in the judgment of an educated congregation at least, from the perpetual repetition of arguments and declamations in support of it. They suspect that there must be some reasonable cry on the other side which we wish to drown; they ask whether the habit of agitating our own minds and the minds of our hearers, upon particular topics, is favourable to moral health and tends to promote a Sabbatical temper; they are apt to think that we magnify enormously those errors to which we are not prone, and proportionably diminish others which lie close to ourselves, and in which we have a grievous share. After telling you very recently, that our first duty is to set right our own tasks and occupations, to see that we are pursuing them in a way to glorify God and benefit our brethren, I should

have hesitated before I turned aside, to pronounce a censure—however I might have thought it to be deserved—upon persons with whom we are not directly connected, and whom a great part of the religious world have already condemned. But ministers of the Gospel who, like myself, after reflecting earnestly upon the subject, cannot persuade themselves that the course which has been taken by those who have commenced and are carrying forward this agitation is a wise or a just one, ought, I think, to obey the call which has been made to them, without demurring to the authority from which it proceeds, and frankly to declare, why they look upon the Sabbath day as the most precious, blessed, and divine of all institutions, and why, because they hold that faith, they dare not take this popular method of enforcing its claims.

That I may not deceive you, or obtain any credit which I do not deserve, from those who hold what are called latitudinarian notions upon the subject, I will say at once, that I regard Scripture as the right and safe guide of our judgments on every moral question; that I believe its help will not fail us in any case if we seek for it; that I would never at any time (certainly not on this subject) set up the New Testament against the Old, which it

illustrates, vindicates, fulfils; that I reverence the Christian Sabbath, not for its unlikeness to the Jewish, but as the interpretation and consummation of it; that I desire no substitution of foreign habits, Protestant or Romish, for those which have prevailed in England, but believe that we should suffer an incalculable loss by the exchange; that I participate in the fear that such a calamity may be in store for us; and that I dislike the present violent excitement, among other reasons, because it seems likely to produce the evil which it seeks to avert.

I see in this tumult, plentiful causes for immediate sorrow, because I am sure it will lead a number to fancy that they can make amends for habitual indifference to the weightier matters of the Law, by their zeal in this; and will produce a bitter dislike of the Sabbath, and great scorn of all religious profession among our fellow-countrymen of the working-class, who will fancy that all religious institutions and religious men are in conspiracy against them. But I see in it ultimate reasons for hope,—because I trust it will compel a more thorough examination of the whole subject. If that examination is faithfully undertaken, it will clear all our minds of many loose notions; it will, I am convinced, issue in the discovery, that a gift which some would make an

excuse for harshness and self-exaltation—which some would throw aside, as worthless and worn-out—is, in truth, one of those which most attests the love of God to all His creatures, and one which they will prize most, when they are taught most to love Him, and to love each other. I have taken the fourth commandment for my text to-day, because I mean to speak exclusively of the Jewish Sabbath, though not exclusively of that which the Old Testament tells us respecting it. Next Sunday, if God permit, I will try to investigate the origin and history of the Christian Sabbath; I would wish to employ a third discourse in considering the application of the principles brought out in the two former, to the circumstances of our own country and our own time. May God grant that His Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Peace—who can alone enable us to enter into His rest, or can keep us from distracting His Church, and wounding the consciences of our brethren, may dwell both with the speaker and the hearers,—teaching them to perceive what things they ought to do, and giving them grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same.

I. The first word of the fourth commandment reminds us that the Sabbath-day was already

established among the Israelites when the Law was delivered on Sinai. That Law created nothing. It preserved and enforced that, which God had already taught His people by another method than that of formal decrees to observe. All divines have insisted—would to God they would not only insist in words, but recollect habitually—that the Sabbath-day does not stand upon an enactment, any more than marriage does, any more than the reverence of fathers does,—but that it is a primary institution of humanity, a part of God's divine and original order, having its foundation in His own nature, and therefore, in the nature of the creature whom He has formed in His image. I do not stop to prove this point now. I have often tried to show you, that the whole Scripture is a discovery and revelation to us, of the laws according to which God has made the universe and made man. I am merely affirming that this is the doctrine which is asserted and implied in the word 'remember;' a doctrine which those who differ from me most in some of my conclusions, will not, I should suppose, be inclined to dispute. For it is thus we understand, how the words of the commandment are connected with the words in the Book of Genesis, respecting the Creation. It is thus

we see why the Israelites were taught, before they came near the burning mountain, that they were to gather manna on the six days, and to expect none on the seventh. It is thus that the Sabbath-day is brought into connexion with all that are sometimes called the moral precepts of the Law, and receives a part of their sacredness, not being separated from them as a mere formal and positive ordinance for a peculiar people. It is thus, also, that the office of a peculiar people is clearly understood and set forth. The Jews, as I have so often pointed out to you, while lecturing on the Old Testament, were called out of all nations, to be a witness of that which is true for all nations—were made exclusive, that they might protest against the exclusiveness into which those necessarily fell who had a separate God over each district and each occupation,—were formed into a society fenced round with rigid rules and ordinances, that they might testify of Him who is at the foundation of all society, who alone prevents it from being torn into fragments. If there was a great, primary, eternal distinction grounded in the Being of God Himself, to be expressed in the order of man's life, to regulate his thoughts, acts, purposes, it must be the especial function of a people whom He had

chosen as His witnesses, to preserve this distinction —to preserve it as the most precious part of their own national economy. It would be one of the signs that would mark them out as different from all other people; it would be one of the signs that would mark them out as the guides and teachers of all people.

If I have spoken of that which existed before this commandment, I have done so not to escape from the letter of it, but because the letter drove us beyond itself; because we could not interpret it without reference to other parts of the record which contains it. Most willingly do I go back to it, assured that every part of it deserves our fullest and deepest consideration. The word '*holy*,' which people in our day repeat as if they were quite sure that they knew what it means, and could assume that every one else knew what it means, must, it seems to me, be interpreted by the Scripture itself, and not by any notions or practices of ours. The people of Israel were told that they were holy to the Lord, —that they were, as a body, consecrated to Him —that they existed to bear witness of Him to all the families of the earth. They could not separate the holiness of the Sabbath from the

holiness of the Nation. In recollecting that *it* was set apart, they were to recollect that *they* were set apart. If ever one belief was to perish, the other must perish too. If one was revived, the other must revive with it. Should they be led, by any false teaching or indulgence in evil courses, to doubt their own holiness as a nation, the attempt to enforce a holy Sabbath upon them would be impossible. *A* Sabbath might be enforced, but it would not be God's. The reason which He gave for the institution would be inapplicable. A commandment of man's, not His, would be the foundation of it.

II. But the precept goes on: 'Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do.' This is not a preliminary to the commandment, but an integral part of it. Work is enjoined, just as much as rest is enjoined. The Israelite was to feel that he was working because God bade him work, that that was a divine calling, that that was made holy by the Lord, and was holy to him. It is the most utter perversion of this law—a perversion from which all others have, perhaps, begun—to separate those things which God has so wonderfully joined together, which He has so wonderfully distin-

guished, in the course of nature and in the Kingdom of Grace; to treat the day of rest as if it were His, and the days of work as if they were man's. All worldliness, all ungodliness, is involved in that doctrine. Six-sevenths of man's time are delivered over to Mammon; one-seventh is graciously bestowed upon God. So people believe that they are keeping His ordinances. And how much of our religious teaching countenances the delusion!

III. This commandment does not countenance it in the slightest degree, but strikes at the root of it. 'The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt do no manner of work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor the stranger that is within thy gates.' Man's sin has made work into a curse. God has redeemed and restored work into a blessing, by uniting it again to the rest, with which, in His divine original order, it was associated. He asserts this rest for all classes together, for the man-servant and the maid-servant, as well as the master. He declares, that by His holy ordinance all shall have rest who have work; that one implies the other. It is sin to refuse the one to any on whom you enforce the other. What an unspeakably gracious ordinance was this to

come forth amid thunders and lightnings, and a burning fire! One which brought all Israelites to the same level, which showed forth the Lord and God of all, caring for all, vindicating the same blessing for all, regarding the commonest life of every one as dear to Him, and a worthy subject of His government. And yet, there was need of the thunder and the lightning and the fire to enforce this decree, as much as that against idols, or that against murder; for the same root of bitterness in each man, the same hard selfishness, would lead to the continual violation of all three.

IV. The Divine reason upon which this is grounded still lies behind. We are told often that the Sabbath is to be observed, simply because it is written in the 20th chapter of Exodus that it should be observed. Will those who say so read *what* is written in the 20th chapter of Exodus? Do they find there a mere arbitrary decree, without a reason given for it? If they do, let them by all means adhere to that decree, and obey it as well as they can. But if they find God giving a reason for what He appoints, is it reverent to say, 'we will take the precept without the reason; we will not apply ourselves to the consideration of that; we will not use it in determining any

cases which may come before ourselves?' What, are we wiser than He? Do we know better what is good for us than He does? Everything, I believe, will be found to turn upon this reason of the commandment, everything in its relation to the old world, everything in its relation to the new. God rests; therefore He would have man rest. God works; therefore He would have man work. Man cannot rest truly unless he remembers his relation to God who rests. Man cannot work truly, unless he remembers his relation to God who works. God created the world; it is a finished work; the order of it is established and abideth, and is very good. God is every day, and hour, and moment, carrying on a new and fresh creation, causing new grass to spring up, and trees to bud and blossom and bring forth fruit, and fishes to multiply in the sea, and birds in the air, and beasts upon the ground, and new generations of men to appear, that they may replenish the earth and subdue it. Except you believe in the permanence of the order, you will be distracted and overwhelmed by the endless, exhaustless fecundity of the things around you, as well as by their continual decay. You will be lost in the infinite vicissitude, and trying to escape from it, you will

seize some of the fleeting and perishing objects before you, and try to refer all to them, or at least try to refer yourself to them, and so you will fall down and worship them. If you fix your mind upon the permanence of the order, and turn away your thoughts from the facts of change and growth which present themselves on every side, you will sink into the acknowledgment of a hard, fixed, decreeing fate which you may invest with what name you please, but which will not be the living God. The week, consisting of the day of rest and the days of work, wrought into the tissue of human life, brings a harmony out of that which would be else a mere discord, a wearisome, hopeless contradiction. In proportion as the ordinance is really kept, as we adhere to God's method of linking together work and rest, the harmony becomes a practical one. It does not stay as a dogma or theory outside of us, but penetrates our existence through and through, adjusting and uniting a man's highest contemplations with his most trifling daily acts.

V. This is the law to which Christians appeal, when they say that they regard the Sabbath as a perpetual obligation. Of course they do not refer to the penal legislation of the Jewish people; of

course they believe that that belonged to conditions and circumstances which have passed away. No one, so far as I know, (I cannot answer for the early Puritan legislators in the North American States,) has supposed that a man is to be put to death for working or gathering sticks on the Sabbath, or even that a fire is not to be lighted on it. He who does not distinguish between Divine and eternal laws, and the peculiar statutes which are ordained for men in a certain stage of society, and as dwelling in a certain locality, has read the books of Moses to very little profit, for no books bring out that distinction so strongly and vividly as they do; none more carefully surround the particular enactment with minute accidents, which prove that it is not intended to be used where these accidents do not exist. It is quite possible that these penal decrees were only designed for the people while passing through the wilderness; that they were adapted to the condition of a mixed and disorderly multitude on its march. At all events there is no allusion in the Prophets to them, though there is very frequent allusion to the moral and national blessings which would follow, if the Sabbath were kept according to its meaning and principle, and the degeneracy which had accompanied, or would accompany the abuse of it.

VI. Thus Isaiah says, in a passage of his fifty-eighth chapter, which is continually quoted, but the sense and context of which I fear are often forgotten, 'If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, holy of the Lord and honourable, and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, not finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.' If you refer to the opening of this discourse, you will see that it is addressed to a people in a particularly self-righteous state, who fancied that they *were* keeping strictly the ordinances of God, who complained that when they fasted, He did not hear them, who afflicted their souls, bowed down their heads as bulrushes, and spread sackcloth under them. They are told that such services as these would never be acceptable to the Lord, for that in the day of their fast they found pleasure, and exacted all their labours; that their duty was to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke. Then, it is said, will their light break forth as the morn-

ing, and their health will spring forth speedily, and their righteousness shall go before them, and the glory of the Lord shall be their reward.

How naturally does the allusion to the Sabbath come in here! They had never understood its holiness, its honourableness; what a witness it was bearing on behalf of the man-servant and the maid-servant, the poor and the needy. It had been to them a day of exacting labours, a day of self-seeking and self-indulgence; yes, even when they were turning it into a fast—into a hard service. It had been a day of strife and debate, of bitter railing and fault-finding. All its glorious meaning had been lost, and therefore the people were none the better for it; the moral tone of the nation was not raised by it. Oh! if they did keep it in spirit and in truth, how different the case would be! What new knowledge would there be of the mind and will of God! What a new light in every palace and every hovel!

VII. So again, there are the well-known words of Jeremiah, in the 17th chapter of his prophecy: 'Hear ye the word of the Lord, ye kings of Judah. If ye diligently hearken to me, saith the Lord, to bring in no burdens through the gates of this city on the Sabbath-day, but hallow the Sabbath-day to do

no work therein; then shall this city remain for ever. But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath-day, and not to bear a burden, even entering into the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath-day, then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.' A most terrible denunciation surely! And as it was spoken, so it came to pass. Do you think the punishment was for this simple act of carrying a burden on the Sabbath-day? Those who do, can never have read the prophecy of Jeremiah; they must not talk of following the Bible, for they do not know what the Bible contains. The prophecy points out a multitude of moral evils of which the princes and priests and prophets of Jerusalem were guilty. They were idolatrous, they were self-righteous, they were adulterous. These were the sins that were eating up the land, because they were eating up the hearts of those who dwelt in it. But here was an index of the temper which exhibited itself in so many ways. When the great men insisted upon burdens being carried through the gates on the Sabbath-day, they were robbing the poor man of rights which God had claimed for him: they showed that they did not believe that He who

was the common judge of prince and peasant, was in the midst of them. This want of brotherly feeling, this unbelief and godlessness, would assuredly bring destruction upon that land, for in them lie the seeds of destruction for all lands.

VIII. Once more. In the 20th chapter of Ezekiel, when He answers an inquiry of the captive elders of Israel, by reviewing the whole history of the nation, we have the memorable words, 'I said I am the Lord your God. Walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments; and do them, and hallow my Sabbaths, and they shall be a sign between me and you that I am the Lord your God.' And then the complaint is made: 'They have not executed my judgments, they have despised my statutes; they have polluted my Sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols.' Here the Sabbath is represented precisely as the fourth commandment represents it. It is the sign or sacrament of the union of the unseen Lord to the nation. The Israelites polluted the Sabbath, because they did not receive it as such a sign or sacrament. They did not believe that they were in God's covenant. They did not like to retain Him in their knowledge. Their hearts went after their idols. They were seeking Gods of their

own. They were a divided, self-seeking people; therefore the Sabbaths, like any other witness of a loving and gracious presence, had become worthless in their eyes.

IX. There are other passages, very awful passages, to be found in these Prophets, which I must not pass over, though I have not time to dwell upon them. They, too, are connected with prognostics of coming overthrow. Their force is not exhausted by the events which attested their truth. They are such as these: 'Your Sabbaths and your appointed feasts my soul hateth. I am weary to bear them. When ye make many prayers, I will not hear you. Your hands are full of blood. Wash you. Make you clean. Put away the evil of your doings from among you. Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Judge the fatherless, plead for the widow, relieve the oppressed.' I wish you to remember that these words were uttered by the men who loved the Sabbath most, who were most eager for the true observance of it; who were uttering, as we believe, God's own judgment respecting it. They at least show us, if we had no other and higher guide, that there are evils to be guarded against as fearful as those which we are told in tracts and

handbills will draw down the Divine vengeance upon cities and kingdoms.

X. It is not wonderful that the Jews, after the captivity, as they had been schooled by a long discipline into an understanding of the meaning of the second commandment, so had learnt also to appreciate in some degree the worth of the fourth. Nehemiah, the brave and noble-hearted reformer of the fallen city, speaks frequently and with great emphasis of the Sabbath, as a gift of God which their fathers had lightly esteemed, and which the new generation was bound most fondly to cherish. The self-same holy and godly inspiration which led him to put down the oppressions of the nobles, who had sold their brethren for their debts, led him to assert the sanctity of the law, which was the common protector of all classes, the sign that his people was indeed the people of God. There is nothing sadder or more instructive than to observe the way in which the words and acts of him and of his fellow-labourers were abused by the Jews who lived between their age and our Lord's nativity. There was a brilliant period, indeed, in that interval, when reverence for the law and the covenant of their fathers and the blessed signs of the nation's calling, produced

deeds worthy of patriarchs and judges and kings. When the little band of Maccabæan patriots rose against the Syrian oppressor who defiled their temple, corrupted their sacred books, and wished to force upon them the abominations of idol worship,—when, undismayed by his power and by the apostasy of their own priests, they bade him defiance in the name of the Lord of Hosts, and showed how paltry his strength was by the side of their weakness,—proof was given that the living God was not less ruling His land, and fighting for it, than in the days when the voice of prophets was heard and acknowleged as His voice. But, after that glorious outburst, there came an age of seeming godliness, of real unbelief; an age when there was talking and debating without end about the meaning and character of the law, the relative worth of its different precepts, the modes in which it was to be observed; but when it was regarded merely as a law contained in a book, not as one coming forth from the mouth of the Lord of Hosts; when those who copied it out most carefully, and took most pains in inscribing its letters upon their garments, did not love it, did not carry it in their hearts, but felt its commands as a burden, a slight portion of

which, with many alleviations, they were to carry themselves, but which they were to lay with all its weight on the shoulders of others. In that most dark and heartless period, the open crimes of which are recorded in the narrative of the Jewish historian, the secret radical disease of which was to be laid bare when the Lord Himself came suddenly to His temple,—in this time practices, and rules, and maxims, and penalties respecting the observance of the Sabbath, were accumulating every day; the ingenuity of each Rabbi was tasked to discover new ones. In that time the Sabbath itself, all its human graciousness, all its divine reasonableness, were becoming each day more utterly obscured.

XI. You know that these statements do not rest upon any inferences of mine. You know that they all rest upon His words, who spake as never man spake. He said that He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil. And in order that He might fulfil it, in order that He might bring out its meaning and righteousness, all those cobwebs which the spiders of the Rabbinical schools had spun, must be cut through. Have you ever considered how very large a portion of the acts and words of our Lord, recorded in all

the four Gospels, bear upon this subject of the Sabbath-day? Have you ever considered that these words and acts were those which most drew down upon Him the wrath of His greatest enemies? Have you ever observed that His sternest denunciations against the Pharisees refer to the objections which they raised against this part of his conduct? Do you remember that the one time when He is said to have looked round upon them with anger, was when they objected to His healing the man with the withered hand upon the Sabbath-day? Do you think that all this time He was merely relaxing the severity of Rabbinical precepts, merely establishing one case in which the fourth commandment might be construed less strictly than the Jews of that day supposed that it could? Do you not think that in this, as in every case, He was doing what He said He came to do, fulfilling the law, exhibiting the inmost intent of the divine day?

XII. On one occasion the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath-day: 'There are six days on which men ought to work; in them, therefore, come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.' Was it not a reasonable suggestion? Supposing

it was a justifiable thing, a thing not absolutely to be prohibited, that men should be cured upon that day, was it not better to abstain—better to set an example of adherence to a customary rule, than to risk the probability of diminishing the popular reverence, by breaking through it? Certainly, most of us would have said so; certainly, this would be the opinion of the religious world in our day, as it was of the religious world in that day. He who was the object of the hatred of that world, He who knew what was in man, He who knew the mind of the Father, thought otherwise. According to His judgment, He was carrying out the very purpose of the Sabbath when He healed on that day. He was proclaiming it to be a day of healing and of blessing to the weary, heavy-laden children of earth; He was declaring that they were not children merely of earth, but children of His Father in heaven, those whom He was inviting to do His work and to share His rest. He was claiming those as heirs of the covenant with Abraham whom the Pharisees were casting out as vile,—treating as unfit for contact with them. He was showing that the relief of bodily sufferings and calamities, of sufferings which the Pharisees, in their affected regard

for the soul, treated as lying beyond the sphere of religion, was the most effectual witness which could be borne of a spiritual deliverer. You will see, I am sure, when I quote our Lord's words, that I am not putting into them a meaning of mine, that they express all I have said with Divine might and clearness:—'The Lord then answered him and said, Thou hypocrite; doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from his stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath-day?'

XIII. This is one of those great practical arguments, so simple in its form, so profound and so various in its application to the deceits of the human heart, by which He showed that the exceptions which they made, and were obliged to make, from the formal rule of not working, were made in favour of themselves; and that the rigour which they were trying to enforce upon others, destroyed the very principle and object of the divine ordinance. There is another dispute of His with the Pharisees, recorded especially by St. Mark, which connects their thoughts on this subject with the feelings

which led them to reject Him. The Sabbath was made for man, He says, not man for the Sabbath; 'therefore, the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath-day.' The religious teachers of the Jews did not believe that God had made the Sabbath for man. They looked upon Him as a distant Being, who had made statutes and decrees for His creatures, not as one who had formed them in His own image, and established between them and Him an eternal bond, which the sin of man was concealing —which He was seeking to make manifest. The claim of Jesus to be the Son of man and the Son of God, was therefore, in their judgment, horrible blasphemy. The Sabbath, which they used to create a separation between the children and their Father in heaven, Jesus asserted to be a pledge of their union, of his desire to be reconciled with them. He, as the Mediator, declared Himself to be the Lord of it, and proved Himself to be so by turning what they made a curse into a blessing.

XIV. St. John carries us a step further in the history of these discourses. When the Jews accused Jesus of healing the sick man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath-day, He said, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' They were start-

ling words, and the Jews were startled by them. 'He has not only broken the Sabbath,' they said, 'but has called God His Father, making Himself equal with God.' Nor did he evade the charge. His language was only justifiable on the supposition that He was, and ever had been, the Son of God; that He had taken flesh to show forth His Father's mind, to exhibit the true idea of His rest and His work; to enable His adopted children to rest and work as He does.

Here is the fulfilment of the fourth commandment. Christ, the minister of the circumcision, to accomplish the promises made to the fathers, asserts the true glory of the Sabbath-day, in asserting the mystery of His own relation to God and to His creatures. Christ, the author of the New Testament, prepares the way for the New Sabbath, which is the expression of God's accomplished work in man's redemption, of His divine rest in the well-beloved Son.

SERMON II.

THE NEW TESTAMENT SABBATH.

Preached at Lincoln's Inn, Nov. 7, 1852.

HEBREWS iv. 11 : *Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.*

THE phrase 'Labour to enter into rest,' sounds strangely. Yet we cannot say that our translators have perverted or exaggerated the contrast which was in the mind of the writer. No word can express more energy and effort than the one he has used. And it is quite in harmony with the argument of the whole chapter, even of the whole epistle. He attributes to his countrymen, in former days and in his own, a moral and spiritual torpor. That, he treats as the cause of their not entering into rest. They have a sluggish unbelief in that which God has revealed to them respecting himself and them; therefore they are unfixed, fluctuating, restless. Belief and Rest he treats as kindred and inseparable ideas. But as Belief is, according to

Him, the living state of a moral and spiritual being, he connects Rest also with the life of all thoughts and affections, not with their death.

The allusions in this chapter, as well as in the last, to the Jewish Sabbath, are very marked and obvious. "One speaks in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise: 'And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.'" This the writer represents as the ground of a call to man to rest from his own works. Then he quotes the 95th Psalm, as evidence that the call was not obeyed by a number of those to whom it was addressed. It was in vain that nature beckoned them to rest, in vain that an express decree interpreted and confirmed its voice. There was that in them which refused rest, which made rest impossible. There could be no Sabbath keeping for them, though the Sabbath-day might be the most fundamental of all their institutions, nay, the one of which they boasted most.

The Jews might indeed say, 'God gave us the blessing of this institution, when He brought us into Canaan. That was always held forth to our fathers as a place of rest for which the weariness and sore travail of the wilderness were to prepare them.' No doubt there was warrant for this view

of the case. The fourth commandment, when the law was repeated, referred directly to their redemption from Egypt, as one principal part of its meaning. No doubt the unbelief of the people in the redemption that had been wrought out for them, their distrust of the promise that they should be able, in the strength of God, to conquer the sons of Anak, and to possess the cities that were high and walled up to heaven—was the cause of their murmuring, their cowardice, their restlessness, their punishment. No doubt the actual triumphs of Joshua were a confutation of their unbelief, a proof that Moses and the Sabbath-day had declared a truth, and not a lie. But the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews reminds them that the Israelites had already entered into the land which Joshua won for them, when David spoke of their hardening their hearts and not entering into rest. There must, therefore, he says, be a different rest than this for the people of God. Rest in Canaan, does not fulfil the idea of the fourth commandment; that points to a resting of man in God.

There are those who discover in the frequent allusions to another day, which occur in this chapter, the announcement or prognostic of a new

Christian Sabbath, of the first day as intended to displace the seventh. I cannot say that this thought was not present to the mind of the writer. Very possibly it may have been. But I dare not build any conclusion upon so uncertain an hypothesis. An institution which has lasted for eighteen centuries in the most civilized parts of the universe, which has been preserved amidst all differences of customs, languages, opinions, among races and churches which have been slaying and anathematizing each other, cannot rest upon the doubtful construction of one passage, or of twenty. And I believe the Epistle to the Hebrews explains to us the origin and history of that new Sabbath much more effectually and satisfactorily by the great general principles which it brings to light and enforces, than it could possibly do by any special language of this kind, the force of which critics and not wayfarers must detect.

The great object of the epistle, I conceive, as I had occasion to point out several years ago in this place, is to bring forth the reason and ground of those institutions which the Jews had accepted as mere formal ordinances belonging to their race, with the view of preparing them for events, now close at

hand, which would shake their national polity to its centre, and would utterly destroy it unless there were in it a divine and universal substance. Setting this object before him, he devotes himself to the task of showing that a Son of God and a Son of man, a Mediator between God and man, was implied in all the history and institutions of his country; that such a person had now been manifested; that His character and work would be attested by the dissolution of the framework of the Jewish commonwealth; but that a divine and universal commonwealth, which had been implied in that, and for which it had been the preparation, would be presented to the world when it disappeared. As part of this doctrine, the most essential part of it, he dwells upon the fact that Christ had actually presented the full and perfect sacrifice which alone could satisfy the mind of God or the mind of man; that God, in raising Him from the dead, and so affirming Him to be His well-beloved Son, had witnessed that the conflict was accomplished; that peace was established between earth and heaven; that God could rest in the perfect image of His creature, which was shown forth in the crucified Man; that men could rest in the perfect image of God, which He

had shown forth in the same Person. Here was that rest of God which He affirmed to be more perfect than that with which He looked upon the universe on the seventh day. Here was that rest into which he invited Hebrews, because they were men, to enter.

I conceive, brethren, that the Jew has the best possible right to say, 'If you stand upon edicts, you must adhere to the fourth commandment, according to what we know, and you know, to be the intention of it. You must keep the seventh day, or no day at all.' I could not answer this argument; I do not think anybody could. For what are hints and passages to a law given amongst thunders and lightnings, proceeding from the mouth of God himself? But if, as I tried to show you last Sunday, that law, instead of being an arbitrary enactment, contains its own reason, draws our attention to it, will not allow us to forget it; if it was to this reason of the commandment that all prophets appealed, as explaining wherein the breach of it consisted, and what perils lay in the breach of it; just as it was to this reason that our Lord appealed when He was vindicating the true observance of it from those who had utterly misunderstood and perverted it; then I say that the

institution is not divine unless it carries out this reason, embodies it, exhibits it, converts it from a mere idea into a fact, abandons its own accidents, so far as is necessary for the preservation of its eternal substance. The question at issue between us and the Jew respecting the Sabbath, cannot be separated from the whole question which is at issue between us and them. If there has not come one into the world who has a right to the name of the Son of God and the Son of man, if God in Him has not reconciled the world unto Himself, if a complete sacrifice has not been offered for the sins of all mankind, if He who died on the cross has not gone into the holiest place, into the presence of God for us, and is not the perpetual high-priest between us and God, then assuredly our Sabbath day is a delusion because our faith altogether is a delusion.

But if all this is as we affirm it to be, then we are not evading the verbal force of the fourth commandment, when we make the day of our Lord's resurrection the Sabbath-day. That must, according to the Christendom hypothesis, explain the mighty secret how it was possible for man to rest because God rests, for man to be holy because God is holy. That must show what the nature of

God's rest is, that it is the rest of complacency in an object worthy to be loved; what man's rest is, that it is the rest of complacency in an object worthy to be loved. That must show that all work is holy so far as it begins and ends in this rest; unholy, so far as it is separated from this rest.

The division of time then into the one day and the six days wanted no sentences of evangelists or apostles, no decrees of councils while the rulers of the world were still pagan, no decrees of monarchs after they became christianized, to call it into existence, or to stamp it with authority. It descended upon the Church like every other part of the history and economy of the chosen people. It was altered and transfigured like every other part of that old economy and history, by the revelation of Him who was its centre and corner-stone. If you would know any other causes which led to the adoption of it, you will not find them. On the contrary, you will find a great many motives and influences which might have led to the rejection of it, which were frequently threatening that result. The Christian Churches at the commencement of the second century could no longer call Jerusalem their capital or mother city. The

apostles, who had been a link to connect the old world with the new, had passed away. A considerable section of those who formed the Jewish element in the Church, disclaimed fellowship with their Gentile brethren, clung more tenaciously to the exclusive forms which had no longer any external hierarchy to support them; consequently drove those who did not acknowledge themselves merely as part of the synagogue into an almost necessary reaction against it. A terrible insurrection of the Jews in the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian, made the separation still more sharp and decisive, for the followers of the new leader, the new Christ as they considered him, treated the followers of Jesus as their worst enemies. The effects of the conflict are visible in the writings of the Apologists of that age. Justin, who was born in a village of Samaria, and brought into close contact with the Jews, shows how much he and his brother christians dreaded what he calls Sabbatizing, that is, falling into the customs of the old nation, and so losing the acknowledgment of their having been fulfilled in Christ. If such were the tendencies and fears of the most conspicuous members of the Christian Church at the time when it was coming forth as a united and spiritual kingdom in

the midst of the Roman world, you will see how wonderful a thing it was that the ancient ordinance which the Jews had made such a continual excuse for denouncing our Lord, nay, for conspiring against His life, should nevertheless have established itself among His devoted followers, and been received as one of the institutes of His kingdom. And yet so it was. No feelings, impressions, natural prejudices, reasonable suspicions, anxiety to avoid past dangers, inferences apparently following from the teaching of Christ and His apostles, could prevent an ordinance which might have seemed to be cast away among the ruins of the fallen city, or mixed with the ashes of the temple, from starting into new life, and moulding the whole time and order of modern society. It was not the edict of Milan, which Constantine published immediately after the victory that made him master of Rome, which determined the future character of his empire. That was only an edict of toleration, one which relieved the Christians from the persecutions which they had undergone under Diocletian, Maximian, and their colleagues. It was the decree which sanctioned the observance of Sunday, enrolling it among the festal days of the capital city, which really revolutionized the

state, and compelled the pagans to feel that their faith was fallen. For the emperor, probably almost without intending it—nay, while speaking of the day as *Dies Solis*—had adopted the resurrection into the circle of men's habitual thoughts and acts. He had allowed the old Jewish distinction of work and rest, interpreted by the Gospel, to penetrate beneath all the days, unlucky or propitious, which the augur or the pontifex had consecrated.

When this same institution was proclaimed amongst our Gothic ancestors, it found, so at least we have been taught to believe, some forms which seemed to have anticipated it, and with which it could blend. But there is nothing more remarkable or worthy of being reflected upon, than the change which those primitive elements must have undergone when this new formative principle came in to disturb and re-organize them. The God whom the eye could not see or the ear hear, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, claiming the day of the sun, the day of light, as His day, and in virtue of that, claiming to rule each other day which had been devoted to the service of some separate divinity;—the Father of the Man, and in Him of all men, surmounting and reducing under

Himself all those gods of nature to whom men had been bowing down; a God who cared for the serf and the bondsman, acknowledged as the highest of all and yet the nearest of all, presiding over the daily tasks, appointing the needful and the gracious rest;—consider how this must have translated the words of the preacher into reality—how it must have undermined idolatry, not by defacing idols, but by introducing another law and order in place of its incoherent medley of services and propitiations—how it must have helped to shape out a new Christendom society out of what seemed the rudest materials, out of what yet were the stones wherewith God designed to build His own Temple.

These influences must not be attributed to any design or deliberate calculation in those who diffused the Gospel amongst the barbarous nations, and brought them within the fold of the Church. The Sunday was enjoined as other festivals were enjoined. The birth-days or dying-days of apostles and martyrs were fit subjects for the recollection and gratitude of those whom they had benefited by their words and lives. Holy men and women who had done services, or were thought to have done services, for particular places, soon obtained the like honour. There were days

that celebrated the foundation of churches, the opening and blessing of wells, the discovery of relics. They mingled with traditional customs which could boast of a long heathen prescription. It was not to be expected that days which appealed to direct palpable associations, to cures wrought in the very neighbourhood, to gifts which every worshipper might hope to obtain, should not be cherished with especial fondness. The Sunday made no appeal to this kind of sympathy. It was comprehensive; it pointed to the invisible; it was a witness not for, but against, superstition and idolatry. That it should have maintained its ground through the middle ages, that its sanctity should have been acknowledged as high and transcendant, that it should have kept up the idea of the balance of work and rest when so many influences were disturbing that balance, is not a fact which can be accounted for by Church legislation or priestly influence, far less by the terror of state enactments. All these did homage, sometimes willing, sometimes reluctant—occasionally judicious—often very awkward and undesirable—homage to a principle which they did not create and which they could help little to strengthen.

The proof of this appears at the time of the

Reformation. The reformers appealed to the Bible as an authority which surmounted all ecclesiastical maxims and decrees. The Bible, they said, contained a direct message from God to man, and proclaimed emancipation from those fetters which his own evil nature as well as the inventions of other men had bound him with. Festivals and fasts seemed to them a part of these fetters, checking the spirit of man in its ascent to God, substituting outward observances for inward faith. The question arose, 'Is not the Sunday one of these festivals?' They could not answer 'No;' they could not find any precept for observing it in the New Testament. The old law which fixed another day had, they thought, clearly been abrogated. Therefore, for the most part, the foreign reformers saw no principle upon which they could enjoin the observance of the Lord's day. It must be left to every man's conscience; or the legislators of each nation must do what they found most convenient for the well-being of the state. These were the considerations which most directly and consciously influenced them. There was another, of which, I believe, they were not equally aware, but which, I cannot doubt, operated upon them powerfully. Strongly as they believed and

asserted that Christ's sacrifice on the cross was made once for all, and that no human sacrifices could render it more complete, they did not hold, practically at least, that it was a sacrifice for mankind, that the world was reconciled to God. A festival which proclaimed this, which bade all men everywhere to enter into God's rest, which spoke of nations as holy, like the Jewish nation, had not its full significance for them. Individuals might enter into this rest on one day, or any day; but why should there be a great levelling day which seemed to speak to the faithful and unfaithful, which seemed to declare that God was sending His spiritual grace like His rain, upon the just and upon the unjust, upon the good and upon the evil? With all their desire to preach a gospel in words to the most sinful and outcast, this was a kind of gospel which clashed with many of their strongest and most deeply-rooted feelings. And they were too honest and earnest to adhere to a mere shadow. They were sure that if the Sunday were not a Sabbath according to the divine sense of the word, it ought not to be put forth as a Sabbath in some earthly and artificial sense.

There was one country, however, which adopted the doctrinal exclusiveness of the continental re-

formers, nay, exaggerated it; and yet which enforced the observation of the Sunday with a strictness previously unknown. I can never speak without reverence of a people so manful and energetic as the Scotch Presbyterians have proved themselves to be in many periods of their history; or of the man from whom they derived so many of their best qualities; or of the habits which he cultivated among them. It is impossible not to see that those habits grew out of the conviction that the laws and principles of Jewish life were to be severely and cautiously cherished as pledges of its divine covenant and calling by each Christian people. Much of the old sanctity of the household, much of the solidity of that people's character may be traced, I conceive, to this cause. But it cannot be denied that the method by which the Scotch Calvinists avoided the difficulty which the Genevan Calvinists had not been able to avoid, was a singular one. If the latter could not explain to themselves the existence of a *festival* which appeared to be meant for all, when according to their theory it could only be realized and enjoyed by a few, the former cut the knot by making it a *fast*. There was no harm in enforcing a penalty on the unregenerate. It was not incon-

sistent that, while putting themselves in all respects at the farthest distance from Romish practices, they should have simply inverted the Romish view of this institution. They gained probably more than they lost. They secured a day which had a divine ground for its observance, though they made that day very different from what we should suppose it to be from the fourth commandment, from the prophets, from Christ.

There was the same resemblance and the same difference between the Scotch and English practice upon this subject as upon most others. Throughout our history we may trace a strong Jewish feeling, a Jewish belief in the position of the sovereign as called by God and responsible to Him, a Jewish sense of the dignity and holiness of the nation, a Jewish reverence for all institutions which could be referred to a divine authority. But our Reformation, conducted by our sovereigns, had been one which more asserted than any other the nation's independence of papal authority, which less disturbed than any other the order of society, civil or ecclesiastical, previously existing within the land. The effect of it was to vindicate for the Sunday its divine ground, its entire distinctness from all days, however they might be

recommended for honour and celebration, which rested on a mere ecclesiastical appointment; while at the same time it retained something of its original character. It was looked on as a day on which God was inviting his creatures to rest, a day which His ministers were to seize for the purpose of teaching them the grounds on which they might rest in Him, and worship Him; not in any respect as one of penance. This was the habit of the nation generally. There was a considerable minority of it, which inclined in this, as in most other respects, to the Scotch doctrine and practice. As the re-actionary and despotical tendencies of the two first Stuarts, their intense loathing of the habits which had grown up and established themselves in the country from which they sprung, their desire to fashion it anew after English models, and in many cases to interpret these models by French or Italian maxims and precedents, alarmed this portion of their subjects, and gave them a power which they had not previously possessed with the most thoughtful part of the nation; so nothing supplied them with more righteous grounds of complaint than the wanton and arbitrary outrage which Charles, probably at the

instigation of Henrietta, though not without the concurrence of Laud, perpetrated on the Sabbath-day. The frantic notion of publishing a book of sports, and enjoining it to be read by royal authority, could only have the effect of driving the mind of the country into the most opposite direction, a direction not natural to it, and in which it was not likely to move evenly or consistently.

The effects of that madness were more visible after the Restoration than even during the Commonwealth. The court of Charles II., instead of adhering to the precedent of the previous reign, allowed, as you know, the most stringent act for enforcing the observance of the Sunday which exists in our statute-book, to pass into a law. That was the age which set the great example of this kind of legislation! Dissenters who desire the repetition of it in our day, must try to revive the spirit of the reign which passed the Conventicle and Five Mile Acts. Those who believe it is possible to enforce morality and Christianity by penalties, may encourage themselves by reflecting what morality and Christianity produced these experiments, and were produced by them. But those who love the day of rest, which God has

provided for the man-servant and maid-servant, and who look upon the day of rest as emphatically the day which testifies of Him, will not wonder that, in an age when humanity and godliness were equally forgotten, the rich of the earth should have thought they might make amends to God for the blasphemies and falsehoods which they were daily committing by enforcing a parody of His decrees upon watermen and mechanics.

Corruptio optimi pessima is a maxim of never-failing truth. I believe, brethren, we may claim for our country the best idea of the Sabbath-day which is to be found anywhere. Whether you agree with me or not, you should at least consider that we cannot abandon this idea without abandoning much more. We cannot merely take the Sabbath-day of the Romanists. With it we must take the whole scheme and principle of Romish society; the order of our life must be based upon an ecclesiastical arrangement. We cannot merely take the Sabbath-day of the German Protestants. With it we must take their conception of the entire separation between the faith of the Christian and the ordinary economy of the world. We cannot merely take the Sabbath-day of the Scotch Presbyterian. With it we must take all that we

took from him in the days when our Parliament accepted the Covenant, and the Westminster Assembly re-organized our ecclesiastical government and our civil life. I would have you well weigh the sacrifices we should have to make of that which is most closely involved with our national and moral existence for generations, by any one of these experiments. But the greatest evil of all is, that not one of them can be sincere. We may counterfeit the habits of other men; but they will never be ours. Our gaiety and our gravity will be both alike affected. The one will not be innocent; the other will be merely pharisaical. And this, I conceive, is our great danger. If we do not realize the true idea of the Sabbath, we shall have a compound of all the worst notions of it that can be gathered from all the ends of the earth, and those notions will be faithfully embodied in a most incoherent practice. A portion of our society will be just as lax as any people abroad; but they will carefully insist upon unmitigated strictness from their inferiors. Among them there will be brutal amusements, mixed with a kind of notion that they ought to be using the day to conciliate the favour of a Being who has no sympathy with them. And—saddest

spectacle of all—our religious people themselves make it a day of excitement, not of rest; of listening to popular preachers, not of worshipping God; a day painful to their domestics, painful to their children; not one which seems to leave any blessing upon themselves, or to make the work of the week more holy and pure.

Dear brethren, these are our dangers. But, if we are aware of them, we may avoid them. We may say deliberately, with a fixed and solemn purpose, 'It is not a *day* that is speaking to me, and bidding me rest. God is speaking to me through that day, and bidding me rest. He who can overcome the restlessness of my mind, as well as the dullness of it, is assuring me that He will. He who desires that I should have an inward and not merely an external peace, is Himself vouchsafing to bestow it upon me. I will therefore stretch out my heart to receive it. I will resist the impulses on the right hand and on the left, the bustle that disturbs the world, the bustle that more shamefully and profanely intrudes itself into the sanctuary: not because I want an ungodly and inhuman quietism, not because I think the business of the world dishonourable, not because I would shrink from any controversies in which my

brethren are interested,—but because I want a standing ground from which I may contemplate the things which are passing, truly, that I may act in them faithfully.'

In this way, we shall begin by degrees to enter into God's rest, and so we shall begin also to do God's work. But since that which is a rest for us, is a rest for all our brethren,—since Christ's resurrection testifies of God's reconciliation, not to us but to mankind,—since every one of our poor brethren is a fellow-heir with us of earth and of Heaven,—we shall feel that it is our business, in every way that we can, to make him a partaker of the blessings of the Sabbath, of its highest blessings as well as its lowest. How we may do this, is an inquiry upon which we should enter thoughtfully and devoutly; not taking for granted current maxims on the subject; not wilfully or scornfully setting ourselves in opposition to them; not permitting ourselves or any one else to thrust in certain inferences from Scripture in place of its own direct statements: not appealing even to those statements, as if they at once decided questions in favour of our schemes, and against some course which may have been recommended by persons as good as ourselves,—but calmly, quietly, as in the

sight of God, testing the application of each principle to each particular case, knowing that no case can be out of the range of a principle, but always reasonably diffident of our own power of showing how the one governs the other. Above all, if we have this spirit, we shall not doubt that God must desire that His creatures, one and all, should enter into His rest, and we shall confess that it is our own unbelief and hardness of heart which have excluded ourselves, and our fellow-men from the enjoyment of it.

SERMON III.

THE CRYSTAL PALACE.

Preached at Lincoln's Inn, Nov. 14th, 1852.

MATT. XII, 7: *But if ye had known what this meaneth, 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice,' ye would not have condemned the guiltless.*

WHEN I was speaking, two Sundays ago, of our Lord's acts on the Sabbath-day, and of His discourses respecting it, I did not allude to the incident which called forth these words. I wished you to see how He himself interpreted His healing on that day, to be not the relaxation of the Jewish law, but the fulfilment of it; how He proved that the Pharisees were violating the letter of the rule, and justifiably violating it, for their own ends; how He claimed a right as the Son of man, to use it for the blessing of the sons of men; how He declared that the works which the Father did on that day, He as the Son might do likewise. But I passed over the story of the

disciples 'walking through the corn-fields, plucking the ears and rubbing them in their hands,' and the complaint of the Pharisees, 'They do that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath-day.' For this story refers not to the Lord, but to the servants. He is not asserting his own right to do good on the day which had been consecrated as a witness for God's goodness and against man's selfishness. He is justifying an ordinary unnecessary act, which had no show of benevolence in it, yet which shocked rabbinical prejudices as much as any greater one could have done. You might have expected Him to dismiss such a charge, either by acknowledging that his disciples were wrong, or by treating it as frivolous. He takes neither of these courses. He treats the objection most seriously, as if it involved, like the other reasonings of the Pharisees on this subject, a mischievous and ungodly principle. He answers it first by appealing to the case of David, who went into the house of God, and took the shew-bread to satisfy the hunger of himself and his followers—next to the case of the priests, whose very services in the Temple on the Sabbath-day violate the letter of the law so far as it prohibits work. Thirdly, he refers to a passage in Hosea, in which God

declares 'He will have mercy and not sacrifice.' Finally, He proclaims the great law which He applied in other cases, 'The Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath-day.'

The allusions to the Jewish king and priest are full of instruction, and should be considered in the light of the great truth, that He, the king and high priest of humanity, came to claim all God's institutions, as witnesses of man's redemption. The quotation from the old prophet expounds these allusions, and brings them home to the conscience of the Jews. The words were familiar to them. They had them ready to cast at a moment's notice against any Heathen or any Jew, whom they supposed to be adopting heathen practices. But they had never known what they meant. Hosea and the prophets generally, warned their countrymen that they were forgetting the God who had made a covenant with their fathers, and had revealed Himself as the God of mercy and truth, and were making gods like those of the nations, whom they must propitiate with sacrifices of their own. The Jews, in the days of our Lord's incarnation, while they pretended to worship the God of Abraham, had fallen into the same sin. They did not see that the ordinances of God were

revelations of His goodness and mercy to the children of men. They did not proclaim them to their own countrymen or to the world in that character, but merely as injunctions by which the Jew was to be distinguished from other men, and the respectable religious Jew from the publican and sinner. They were thus unfitting themselves to receive Christ in that character of a Son of man, which He claimed for Himself so continually in express words; which He more gloriously vindicated to Himself by His death and resurrection.

I take the sentence which He adopted from the Old Testament as my guide in the task which I undertook to perform this afternoon. I have tried to set before you the principle of the Jewish and of the Christian Sabbath. I have wished you to feel, that one ordinance is the expansion and fulfilment of the other. It remains for me to show that the principle is not a dead one; but one which we may apply to our own conduct and our present emergencies. But since the words 'conduct' and 'emergencies' may convey only a vague impression to your minds, I will address myself directly to the topic which is occupying the thoughts of so many at this time. I would rather avoid one which is so exciting; but if I did,

I should miss the very end which I proposed to myself in these sermons, and should lead you to suppose, that Scripture is not the faithful director in practice I have maintained it to be. I shall, therefore, notice other subjects as they rise out of this, and naturally connect themselves with it. And since the arguments of the many able and excellent persons who have pronounced a judgment on this point in which I cannot concur, are entitled to the most grave and respectful attention, I will consider them one by one, not intentionally passing by any, nor admitting any rule in the examination of them, but that which they recognise and to which they appeal.

The question before us is this. It having been proposed by certain persons to open gardens in the neighbourhood of London, in which various objects, allowed to be suitable for contemplation on week-days, may be seen—not only on these days, but during part of the Sunday—are we bound, as Christians and Englishmen, to protest against that design, and to do what in us lies that it may not be carried into effect?

A very considerable, and a very estimable, portion of the English public, says that we are bound to take this course—first, because the whole Sun-

day, according to the laws of God laid down in holy Scripture, being consecrated to religious duties, the scheme proposed will break its unity, assigning part of it to its proper objects, another to mere intellectual gratification: secondly, because the Sabbath is already desecrated to a fearful extent, and it is the duty of all men, but especially of the clergy, to see that it is not desecrated further: thirdly, because numbers will certainly be withdrawn from their regular congregations if so strong a temptation is placed within their reach: fourthly, because the act which is proposed to be done will require a national confirmation, and will therefore be a national act, and will involve a national sin: fifthly, because in all cases of doubt respecting the Sabbath day, it is safer and more religious to incline to the side of strictness, than to the side of laxity.

There are various questions relating to the details of this measure, which I think are entitled to the most serious consideration, but upon which it is impossible to enter, so long as we are told that it is, in principle, impious and unscriptural. Every one has a right to suggest that such or such an improvement in the working of the scheme will remove possible evils from it, or diminish

the amount of labour which it may cause to those who have as much right to the day of rest as their neighbours—if he has first satisfied himself that there is not a horrible enormity involved in the scheme, however it may be carried out. As the case is commonly stated, it would be sinful even to think of any corrections or improvements. To touch such a proposition is to be defiled. Whether this conclusion is true or not, I wish to inquire, and I believe I have enumerated all the arguments by which any persons have been led to adopt it.

I. The proposition concerning our religious duties naturally occupies the first place; all the others depend upon it. Let me remind you then that this phrase is not a scriptural one. I do not say that it has not great value. I am sure that it has. But we must learn what its value is from scripture; we must not adapt its statements to our nomenclature.

If by religious duties is meant obedience to God's commandments, all duties whatsoever are religious duties. The fourth commandment, as I pointed out when I was preaching upon it, obliges us to work on the six days, as well as to rest on the seventh. We are as much serving God in

doing the one as in doing the other, as much resisting His will, if we are intentionally not doing the one as the other. It will be a sad day for England—I need hardly tell you this, while the venerable relics are still among us, which this week will be committed to their kindred earth—when every act that a man does, in the field or the council-chamber, shall not be felt to be a part of his duty, of his religious duty. It will be, and has been, a sad day for the Gospel and the Church whenever it has been supposed that a certain class of services may be called secular, and are subject to the cognizance of a human tribunal merely, not of Him who judgeth the reins and the heart. I make this remark, because I would have you see how great an error we may commit, if we translate the injunction 'on the seventh, or on the first day, thou shalt rest,' into the phrase, 'on the seventh, or on the first day thou shalt perform thy religious duties.' We must understand what those duties are, what the distinction in them is, from the commandment. My religious duty, I grant you, is to rest on one day. But if I want to know what that rest is, I must find it out by some other means. I cannot travel in a circle, and affirm that my rest consists in doing my religious duty.

Supposing, however, this phrase be translated *worship*, and it is said that the rest of the Sabbath-day consists in the worship of God, I admit this to be very true. Though nothing could be more contrary to the spirit of the Old and New Testament than the notion of restricting worship to one day in seven, yet that day in a remarkable manner explains and defines its nature; to that day it has a most special appropriateness. For all worship, if we follow the teaching of apostles and prophets, is grounded upon God's revelation of Himself to man as the God who is seeking after his creature; and is completed when the creature acknowledges that revelation, and turns to the God who is seeking it. God resting in the beloved Son, and meeting those who had wandered from Him, in that Son—the children looking up to their reconciled Father in Him—is not this the explanation of prayers, thanksgivings, sacraments? If preaching is to be joined with those prayers, and thanksgivings, and sacraments, is not this to be the theme of it? Is not the preacher the herald of a Gospel of God's love to man, of the completed sacrifice and atonement? Is he not to show how all acts and duties flow from the relation in which we stand to God in

Christ—how all evil and misery flow from the denial of it? But if this be the case, it must be the greatest of all possible duties, emphatically our religious duty, emphatically our Sunday duty, to set worship before our countrymen in this light. To make them think of a church as their Father's house, as the home for His children, as the refuge for the poor, as the place where they are to realise their union with each other as well as with Him, this must be the obligation which is laid upon us all, upon the clergy above all others. And anything which tends to hinder the growth of this conviction; any mode of stating the nature and character of worship, which causes it to be regarded as a hard compulsory service; anything which leads the poor to look upon the church as a place to which they must go because a human law forces them, not one to which they may come because a divine law of love invites them,—is perilous to their souls, subversive of the meaning of Christian theology, at variance with all the doctrine of Scripture concerning the Sabbath-day.

Brethren, I know that this will sound very ridiculous and impractical in the ears of some people. 'Tempt our people into churches, indeed! Look at them, and see how far it is likely

that such influences will prevail!' I do look at them, and I see that other motives have not prevailed. I do look at them, and I see that the argument from fear, whether enforced by the threatening of God's judgment hereafter, or of the magistrate's judgment here, has not succeeded in making our churches frequented, or our people more eager to know what goes on in them. I do look at them, and I find everywhere symptoms that we need violent excitements to draw the rich to slumber in their pews, and that these excitements are not sufficient to attract the poor to their benches. I do look at them, and I see very decisive evidence that we have not learnt what that meaneth, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;' that we are not using God's mighty methods, but our own feeble and paltry ones, to recommend His service.

But the Sabbath-day should be a whole day, not a divided day. Certainly; its intention and effect is to give wholeness and unity to our lives, to prevent them from being discordant and fragmentary; it must have a right to claim a unity for itself. What kind of unity? I imagine a unity of *purpose*, unity of *spirit*. If we really labour that it may have this, we shall enter into God's

rest; we shall show that His worship has done us some good. If we try to do more, if we insist upon a uniformity of *occupation*, we demand that from others which we know that we do not practise—which we feel that we ought not to practise—ourselves. We are not engaged all day in the public worship of God; we feel that the repetition of prayers and praises would soon become a mockery, if there were not pauses for reflection; that there would be no rest, outward or inward, if there were not an alternation of exercises. We do not, I hope, consider the time devoted to the service of the body, a mere ignominious and shameful necessity, but an occasion for giving of thanks. At least, if we lived like those whom we are taught to regard as our models, it would be so. They ate their bread with joy and singleness of heart, because they had learned the secret of God's love and redemption. 'Oh! but such high standards are not applicable to the low condition of our people!' What consistency! You call upon the people in this low condition to keep a united Sabbath—a whole Sabbath. You say that there must be no departure from the strictness of God's rule, and when we try to ascertain what that rule is, how it ought to be carried out in

practice, that we may be in accordance with the precepts and example of Scripture, you immediately invent another rule, a unity of your own, and insist that all people, high and low, subjects and rulers, shall conform to that. Is not this making a Sabbath, not accepting God's Sabbath?

'But intellectual occupations on such a day must needs be distracting.' Here, again, a maxim is generalized to meet a particular case, which maxim we do not act upon and cannot act upon in other cases. In that country where the Sabbath is supposed to be observed most strictly, is there no seeking for intellectual gratification in the frequenting of preachers, no exercise of intellectual skill—must I not add, no mischievous and proud exercise of it—in the criticism of them? You may wish to prevent any evils which accompany this tendency, but will you silence the teacher that you may take away the temptation to it? Or will you lay down the maxim once for all, that only words can be sanctified to God; that when you contemplate His works, or any forms of beauty, that is not to be a holy or religious exercise—merely, (according to a distinction which you have borrowed from the schools of philosophy—not from the Bible) an intellectual one? Such a doctrine, fully and fairly

stated, involves the most frightful Manicheism, sets aside the very meaning of worship, which is meant to shed its radiance over all the acts and the whole life of man, directly contradicts the practice of our Lord, who sat at marriage feasts and walked with His disciples through the corn fields, drawing the divinest parables from them.

II. I have endeavoured to show you into what dangerous and unscriptural dogmas those have been led who have professed to apply high standards to this subject. I follow them,—not willingly, for how can any one speak willingly of such wretched facts?—into their statements respecting the actual condition of our London people.

I admit, at once, all that they say respecting the present desecration of the Sabbath. If they like to begin where it would be most honest and courageous to begin—with the highest classes—I cannot combat the assertion that there is an employment of men-servants and maid-servants and of cattle on that day which is justified by no necessity, which does rob numbers of the rest God has intended for them. Or if you affirm that these are beyond your reach, and that all you can do is to take care that the poor shall not throw away their souls because the rich do; I

am equally ready to concede that as yet very little progress has been made towards the accomplishment of this end. That uniformity of occupation on the Sabbath-day, which some hold to be the great essential of it, has been attained very completely by great masses in this metropolis. Nothing breaks its low and grovelling monotony. No better or purer pursuit interferes with the rest which is supplied by the gin-palace. Others do go forth from those wretched courts and alleys which have been called, in mockery, their quiet homes and peaceful firesides, into the suburbs. They breathe, once in the week, something like fresh air; they see trees and the sky. But amusements of a very coarse and sensual kind are offered to them there also. The heavy work of the week, the weariness and helplessness of that work, the loss of interest in higher things which our neglect has caused, the destruction of family life and sympathy which has sprung up from husbands and wives and children being rivals of each other in their labours, and from the abominable state of those dwellings in which different families are crowded together,—have made entertainments such as the conductors of the lowest tea-gardens and taverns supply, those which

they feel most congenial. These are facts attested by the most accumulated evidence, not denied but insisted upon by those who are loudest in their denunciations of the new Crystal Palace. Upon the strength of these facts, they adjure us, the clergy of the land,—who know that we cannot prohibit those who have chariots and horses from making any use of the Sabbath that they like, though they have the other six days at their command,—who have looked on quietly at the most low and degraded use of it by those who have that day only for any repose—to fill the air with our cries because certain persons have offered to the humbler classes entertainments which we allow are not dishonourable, not degrading—which may awaken in them some higher instincts, some better aspirations—which do recognise them as human beings, as beings having capacities and sympathies in common with ourselves. It is your duty, brethren—it is more strongly our duty—to watch over the preservation of the Sabbath-day, to do what in us lies that it may be kept more holily than it is now; and therefore I maintain that this is not, this cannot be our duty. It is true, that God does send His punishments upon those who neglect His commands; those commands being for the blessing

of His creatures, the violation of them being for their injury; and therefore I do tremble lest He should call not others, but us, to account for that which He sees among us—lest He should say, 'Ought I not to judge you who are breaking my express command by looking for motes in other men's eyes while there are beams in your own? Shall I not send my sword against an hypocritical people? Shall not my soul be avenged of such a nation as *this?*'

III. But it is said that not merely the outcasts of our land—those who have never thought of a church as their home, who have never believed that the Church had anything to do with them—but that those who frequent her ordinances, our regular congregations, perhaps our communicants, will be drawn from us by these gardens and works of art. Brethren, the fear may be a well-grounded one. But if it be so, must there not be a fault somewhere else than in the gardens and the works of art? The Gospel came into the midst of an age not better than ours; it found a set of men who were familiar with all the spectacles of the amphitheatre, who had facilities for gratifying every intellectual and every brutal taste. It found men pressed down with burdens from

which such spectacles could give no deliverance—toiling hearts for which such objects could not procure rest. It came among them with no civil support; it could not even prohibit the most shameful of such entertainments till it had already achieved its victory. And we, in the eighteenth century of the Christian era, in the midst of a Christian land, openly proclaim that we dare not encounter the rivalship of a few statues and trees, that our Gospel has no power when compared with them. How has this happened? Is it that there are no spirits now crying out for help, for teaching, for emancipation? There never were more in any age or country of the world. Is it that mere sights to the eye and sounds to the ear give them the satisfaction which they could not give to those who lived under the Roman Empire? They confess in a thousand ways that they feel the inadequacy of such comforters. There must be another cause—may God endue us with courage to confess it to ourselves and to Him! It must be that our words do not contain the food or the medicine which meets the great necessities of those to whom we offer them. It must be that as the dogs licked the sores of Lazarus, which the man clothed in purple and fine linen did not heal or

bind up, or mollify with ointment, inanimated nature or forms of human beauty have a gracious and soothing influence, which the divine message spoken by our cold, insincere lips, does not carry with it. But oh! if it be so, what help can prohibitions or restrictions afford us? Every Crystal Palace may be closed, but there will not be one human spirit more quickened or purified. If God does not teach us to show forth the power and meaning of His day of rest—if He does not enable us to receive it and declare it as the witness of His love to all, of the redemption He has wrought for all—if He does not stir us up to proclaim the holiness of work as well as the holiness of rest, and to do what in us lies that it may be a blessing, not a curse, to those who are engaged in it—we may agitate the land against one tempter after another, but our flocks will not abide with us, and their blood will be required, not of those whom we have denounced, but of us.

IV. I know, however, how strongly the feeling prevails that the scheme complained of is a national one, and that therefore it cannot be brought into parallel with any wrong-doings of which individual laymen or clergymen are guilty. Most heartily do I rejoice that we should be led by any arguments

or declamations to recollect what we are all so prone to forget—that we form a nation, and are not a collection of loose atoms. We ought to be thankful for all events, however sad in themselves—for the deaths of great men, for the fears of foreign invasion—which awaken us to a sense of that unity. None should strive so diligently to arouse it as the ministers of the Gospel: they will never be more successful than when they meditate on the origin and purpose of the Sabbath-day, and make their people aware of its holiness. For its holiness, as I said two Sundays ago, was the great witness to the Jewish nation of its own holiness. The seventh day said to the stiff-necked race—to those who were continually setting up idols—to those who were sinking into all low vices, 'Ye are holy, for God is holy. He has chosen you to be a people of inheritance to himself. You become individually and collectively base and grovelling when you forget that He has done so.'

Does the first day bear this witness less strongly than the seventh did? I believe not. I believe that we have as much right to call England a holy nation as the prophets had to call Judæa a holy nation. I believe that it is holy in virtue of God's calling; that the members of it are unholy when

they deny their calling and their unity—when they say that they have no common life, no common interests, when they think each man has an interest of his own which is unlike his neighbour's or contrary to it. Would to God that we could all preach this doctrine, that we could claim every Englishman, whatever his caste or occupation may be, as a sharer in the covenant, in the holiness, in the blessedness of the Nation! It would give us a heart, a courage, a fellowship of which now we know very little, but which soon we may want for the direst emergencies.

And I believe, brethren, it is because we have not done this, that the day of rest has lost its significance and its power for us. Because we have divided ourselves into sects and factions, because we have said to this man and that, 'Stand by, we are holier than thou art;' because we have not addressed all as citizens of God's kingdom, heirs of God's covenant,—the Sabbath day is no longer recognised as more than a human institution, to be upheld by enactments and penalties.

And thence we have come to suppose that a nation can only express itself in such enactments and restrictions, that the only national acts are those which proceed from parliament or some

public office, that the only national sins are those which are committed by cabinet ministers. While we maintain such doctrines, the Bible must remain a sealed book to us, or one which we only open to seek missiles that we may cast at our neighbours. It is surely the duty of statesmen, as it is the duty of us all, to labour for the sanctity of the Sabbath-day. But they must consider, as we must, in each particular case, how this sanctity may be preserved, how it may be endangered. If they are honest men, fearing God, hating covetousness, they will not allow their judgment ever to be swayed by a loud shout, however they may respect particular voices which have helped to swell it. They will remember who said, on this very subject, 'Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment;' who said to rulers of the synagogue, 'If ye had known what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.' The Queen's ministers are told, and rightly told, that they are responsible to God for their acts, that they must not violate that responsibility for a temporary expediency. By all means let them keep that thought in mind, and let no fear of displeasing the religious world induce them to swerve by

a hair-breadth from their conviction; to do anything which they are persuaded it is wrong, to leave undone anything which they are persuaded it is right, to do. In proportion as they give proof that they act upon this principle, they will avoid a number of national sins which arise, like so many individual sins, from cowardice and the dread of public opinion.

V. But all the arguments which I have considered are clenched, and their weakness excused, by one grand canon, 'that in all cases, when a doubt exists in our mind, we shall be acting more reverently and safely if we give the benefit of it to the side of strictness, not of laxity.' Answering not the words of this proposition, but the sense of it, (for I do not defend any laxity—I am endeavouring to discover what is the most exact and scriptural way of keeping the holy day,) I say at once, I reject this canon, for one simple and conclusive reason. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not act upon it, but upon that which is apparently most opposed to it. I qualify the words carefully, since I have shown you that, instead of weakening the force and obligation of the Sabbath-day, no one ever sanctified it as He did. But in the judgment of the men around him, He was, not

once or twice, but continually, breaking through rules which custom had established, and for which it pretended scriptural authority. Will it be said that our circumstances are different from those of the Jews when He was upon earth—that he was surrounded by self-righteous Rabbis—that we dwell among persons who systematically set aside the obligation of the day, among multitudes who habitually transgress it? I deny the difference altogether. There were Sadducees then, who made light of mere institutions; Herodians, who looked at them merely from a state point of view; Roman soldiers, who mocked at all Jewish forms; crowds of people—sheep without a shepherd—utterly estranged from their country and their country's law, ready to become outcasts and brigands. It is historically false—it is theologically dangerous—to draw a line about our Lord's life on earth which hinders it from being an example to His followers in other ages and lands. Each age, when it has been awakened to a knowledge of its own state, has perceived how the one which was chosen for His appearing illustrated its own dangers and duties. There is none that should be more awake to that fact than the one into which we are born. There is none which has

more need to ponder that which was doing in the green tree from which the life and sap had not yet departed; that which He said should be done in the dry after it had separated itself from Him, its divine root. While He was with them, they used all the institutions which God had given them to be witnesses of their common King and Deliverer, as arguments for rejecting Him. When they had cast Him out, saying 'this is the heir, let us kill him that the inheritance may be ours,' they clung to the Sabbath-days, to every thing which reminded them that they had formed a divine commonwealth. But they had lost the centre of it. It was not a commonwealth. They had no bond to each other, for they had no bond to God. And then was the long-delayed sentence upon that ancient tree fulfilled—'Cut it down. Why cumbereth it the ground?'

Brethren, it is not by raising clamours about the Sabbath-day, or about the authority of the Bible, that we can avert this sentence. It is by an earnest repentance for the sins individual and national, for the sins of the people and the sins of the priest, which have kept us from feeling for one another and caring for one another, which have made our rest godless, and our works god-

less; which have made all the blessed testimonies of Scripture concerning the Son of man and the Son of God strange and incomprehensible to us. May He who is raised up on high to give repentance and remission of sins, deliver us from the great sin of having used His name as a name of strife and division! May He Himself teach us what that meaneth, 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice.'

SERMON IV.

THE CHARACTER OF THE WARRIOR A LEGITIMATE OBJECT OF ADMIRATION TO CHRISTIANS.

Preached at Lincoln's Inn, Nov. 21, 1852.

ISAIAH ii. 4: *And He shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*

I SHALL not inquire on what particular occasion these words were spoken. I observed some time ago, when I was preaching upon Isaiah, that they were probably quoted from an older prophet, and that the purpose of the discourse which follows them in this and the third and fourth chapters, was to remove some false impressions which the Jewish people in the days of Jotham had taken up respecting the time and the mode of their fulfilment. I have chosen them for my text this afternoon, because they have given rise to some questions which I think ought to be answered at

this time. We are asked how, with such passages written in sunbeams in the Book which we hold to be divine, we can regard with any complacency the acts and characters of a warrior. It may be natural, we are sometimes told, that worldly men should admire those who have become great through the sword; that the pagan type of excellence should still be the type of excellence for those who adopt Christianity only in name. But can clergymen, can those who urge others to make the Gospel their rule, and the character of Jesus Christ their model, openly join in the same homage? Are they not surrendering a principle; thoughtlessly or consciously following a multitude; impairing the rectitude of their own minds, and the testimony which they bear to all who hear them, by admitting two standards of morality, one derived from the Bible, one from the maxims of the age? Such doubts, by whomsoever propounded to us, ought not to be evaded. If we dismiss them, they will come to us again; if we silence them with mere general phrases, our minds will become bewildered, and our acts insincere. There is so much danger, we all know, of merely catching an infection, of merely obeying a popular impulse, that each man is bound seriously to ask

himself before he moves in a crowd, and allows himself to partake of its sympathies:—Am I complying with a fashion—bowing to an idol which men have set up; or am I acknowledging a divine inspiration which is raising my countrymen above the ordinary level of their feelings; which it is good for them to obey; which it would be shameful and ungodly for me not to obey also?

Of course one may deceive oneself in such self-examination. We may any of us have yielded to a false motive, or to mixed motives, or may have acted without any reflection at all. But I am convinced that the Bible, and this text especially, which is supposed to warrant so different a conclusion, might have helped to clear our consciences; to teach us that our own instincts and those of our countrymen were not wrong but true instincts; to prove that the kind of character for which we have testified reverence and affection, is one for which we ought to feel respect and affection, not because we acknowledge some other law than that which God has given us, but because we wish to be governed by that law.

I. The old prophet, it is often said, was anticipating the Gospel or Christian age of the world,

and was pointing out what ought to be its condition always, what some day will be actually its condition. I do not object to this statement, except for being too vague. The words, 'He shall judge among the nations and rebuke many people,' cannot be diluted into the phrase 'the pure and benign doctrines of the Gospel, or of Christianity, shall be diffused over the world.' They speak not of Christianity, but of Christ; not of a doctrine, but of a King. They speak of One whose dominion had been from everlasting, or ever the worlds were; who had declared Himself, though unseen, to be the King of His people Israel, who would be afterwards manifested as the King of men, who would reign till all His enemies were put under His feet. That this King is merciful and gracious was proclaimed by the law and the prophets, was proved when He took flesh and dwelt among men. But His primary characteristic is that He reigns in righteousness, that His sceptre is a sceptre of justice. The language which describes Him here does not suggest, first of all, an image of tranquillity and peace. 'He shall judge among the nations and rebuke many people;' thus is He represented to us who, we believe, took upon Him the form of a servant, and

was meek and lowly of heart. If then, we make Christ our standard, and allow the Bible, and not our own fancy, to tell us what He is, we must honour any man who acknowledged right, who, we are confident, was a just man. I am quite sure it was the conviction that they were honouring a just man, which gave those crowds we saw last week their dignity and their seriousness. Every person among them might have his own vulgar notions, his own imperfect maxims about good and evil, his own irregular practice. But the common, united, human heart which rose above their individual basenesses and pettinesses, paid reverence, not to outside trappings, not to reputation, not to success, but to that law of right which the man whose earthly glories had all crumbled into dust had confessed, and which could not perish. And so doing, they gave honour directly or implicitly to Christ the utterer of that law, the Christ in whom it was fulfilled. They felt, more truly and piously than some of us feel who should know better, that whatever is good must come from the source of good, and that we deny Him whenever we deny it.

It has been said that this sense of right and order, though it may have been conspicuous in one

man, is emphatically the quality of a soldier: that it belonged to him because, more than any one else, he had entered into the meaning of a soldier's life, into that which the discipline of camps, strictly understood, exacts of those who lead and of those who follow. I cannot contradict this assertion. But then the consequence from it seems to be that this discipline, and the character which is moulded by it, deserve not our reprobation, but our admiration and imitation, because we are Christian men. People do render it. It is their conscience which leads them to render it. I am sadly afraid that if we tell them the Gospel forbids them to render it, they will say that their conscience and the Gospel are drawing them in two different ways. But we have no right to say so. The Gospel gives us no authority to say so. That armies may become mere machines, frightful machines, directed by some will which is merely bent upon destruction, this we all know. That after they have become such machines, particular leaders may put forth their own individual energy, may prove that mind and spirit are meant to have sway over mere physical force, and may use that force to produce a wide anarchy, we know also. None, I believe, are doing more to hasten on one or both of these

dire calamities, than those who represent injustice and violence as the inevitable attributes of the military man, or the military chief. And none, I believe, have done so much to arrest the danger, as those who have shown, through a long and steadfast life, that obedience—not simply to law palpable and expressed in letters, but to that right and equity which the conscience recognises, which is called for on sudden emergencies where no rule can be appealed to, which must be enforced upon others in spite of obloquy, and upon oneself in spite of temptation, which must be tested by its application to minute and laborious details—is the quality which, above all others, the calling of a soldier demands. We paid honour, on Thursday, to the man in whom we believed this quality, this specially humble quality, dwelt largely. According to any standard of ethics, we were bound to revere it for its manifest utility, for its intrinsic nobleness. But the Christian ethics, more than all others, enforced it from us, because such obedience is the recognition of an invisible authority to which the heart and will must bow down when they are most inclined, and when circumstances most enable them, to exalt themselves. Call it military if you will, it is a quality which civi-

lians must cultivate if they would do any good to society, nay, would not be its plagues and pests. Call it mundane, but divines must have it if they would not utterly set aside the words and the example of their Master.

But I may be told that, however desirable and Christian-like such a quality may be, when it is transferred from its proper region to another, in that region it is only an instrument for the accomplishment of an evil end. As long as I have these words written in the Divine Book, and in a passage of it which some who omit large portions of it as obsolete and dangerous delight to quote, 'He shall judge among the nations, and rebuke many people,' so long I cannot accept that statement. I can only look upon all our offices as appointed by Him to carry out certain portions of His own divine work for men. The physician heals bodies under His eye and teaching, and should confess Him as the chief healer. The lawyer should confess Him as the first lawgiver and judge. The priest should own Him as the great high-priest. And if He has still that function of rebuking the nations, then there are wars which are not the work of the evil spirit, but are for the putting down of his works, and the warrior is Christ's

minister in these. And so far as he fulfils his calling faithfully, with a sense of its awfulness and responsibility, with an earnest desire that it may not be necessary, and that blood may be shed only to save that which is more precious than all individual life, the severity of the methods which he must resort to should affect him just as much as those which the lawyer or physician or divine resort to affect them, and no more. The excessive approbation which men sometimes bestow upon his deeds, may, no doubt, mislead him. But if he has borne it meekly, if it has not overthrown his reason or confused his conscience, it may have been granted to sustain him against that loss of self-respect which the ignominious and loathsome parts of his occupation might cause him; to remind him how much more precious the sympathy of one's fellow-creatures is than all exercises of destructive power; even to make him aware by the abundance and surfeit of human applause, how utterly unsatisfactory it is, how little it would be worth while for such an end to risk death oneself, how much less to inflict it upon others. And so he is thrown back, as the member of every other profession must be thrown back, upon the sense of a calling. It *is* worth while to do that

which one is appointed to do. Be the work great or little, respectable or contemptible, apparently gracious, or apparently terrible, it is to be done as ever in the great Task-master's eye; our concern being scarcely at all with the judgment which men may form of it, or the results to which it may lead; the rewards will be what are best for us: God will see to the issue, if each moment's task is not forgotten.

When we are asked, then, whether we can, as heralds and priests of the Prince of Peace, join in the reverence which is paid to a fallen chief, and encourage our countrymen to pay it, I reply, 'Yes, verily. For we priests ought to feel, and I trust do feel, that the warrior puts us to shame in that very character which we profess to bear, of witnesses for righteousness and for the righteous King. With infinitely greater temptations to go wrong than we have, with probably much fewer opportunities of knowing the right, he was yet taught and enabled by Him who alone teaches and enables any one, to eschew the great sin of self-seeking as we have not eschewed it, to pursue a law and standard of justice as we have not pursued it. What his deflections may have been, we know not. But God knows, and we know, what

our own have been. And we should be dishonouring Him and deceiving our own selves, if we tried to escape from the confession of them by pretending that there was one rule for us to follow, and another for him. If we have been yielding to faction, disobedience, and self-will, his faithful resistance to these evils must assuredly rise up to condemn us when Christ owns those who have done His will, not those who have eaten and drunk in His presence, or taught in His name.'

II. It is the next clause of the text, however, which is most frequently in people's mouths; that one of which I have spoken being forgotten. 'They shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks.' 'Observe,' it is said, 'how strong the words are. It is not that swords shall be thrown aside for plough-shares, or spears for pruning-hooks; the first are to be changed into the last, there being no use for them in their original shape.' We accept the criticism, making no complaint of its over-refinement. Then it would seem to follow that the material of which the peaceful instruments are made, is the very same of which the warlike instruments were made, not the first of iron, and the other of some feeble and more flexible sub-

stance. Till, then, all the energies of war are faithfully represented in the acts and services of peace, the prophecy is not fulfilled. It cannot be fulfilled unless the settled purpose of an army, its unity and concentration, the self-devotion of its individual members, the consciousness of a common interest in the leader and in the humblest soldier, are transferred to civil life. It is not in the way to be fulfilled, its principle is directly contradicted, its promised blessings are utterly slighted, in a society where men feel that they are rivals one of another, that each one has a separate object, and is to pursue it at the cost of his neighbour. It cannot be fulfilled in an age which makes gold, in the most material and gross sense, its prize and aim; when mere acquisition is esteemed as the great good; when self-restraint is only valued just so far as it ministers to that good; when all thought, study, enterprise, are supposed to be of worth exactly in proportion as they contribute to it. Such a state of things may accomplish all the dreams of some statesmen and sages; they may desire nothing but a security for its continuance; nothing but a more entire extinction of those instincts and aspirations which disturb it. But it corresponds to no visions of

prophets. The 'thousand years of peace' which they looked for to follow the 'thousand years of war,' were not of this character. In such a society they saw all the elements of wars and fightings, because wars and fightings were already going on in the hearts of its members, because it was, in fact, only a condition in which each class was providing, and ineffectually providing, against the dangers with which some other was threatening it. When the false prophets in such states of society sang 'Peace, peace,' the true men foretold that invaders were coming to destroy the land, and lay it waste. They called upon countries which had fallen into this sleep to awake out of it; they said God's thunders would scatter their dreams, if they did not awake. And though they spoke with trembling of such days of the Lord as they saw approaching, they did not conceal the blessings which might flow from them—in that they would destroy much of the material prosperity to which the nation's soul was sacrificed, in that they would arouse many to feel that they were members of a nation, and that this is a blessing for the sake of which all lesser ones may be cast away.

A military chief, then, who brought into the transactions of civil life the manly sense which

had governed him in the camp, who would suffer no pettinesses of party or of individual feeling to stand in the way of that which was to be carried out, who looked facts in the face, making his own opinions bow to them, who taught with few words that there is an order among men which they must obey, or suffer, may well be thought to have worked more in the spirit of this text—to have done more that the sword should be turned into the ploughshare—than those who set one against the other, and who would make the state of peace unlike that of war only in being more heartless, contentious, inhuman. On this ground it was, I conceive, a righteous and wise thing in one of our Universities to set before her sons the example of a man who knew next to nothing of her peculiar studies, because that which they want, in this day especially, is purpose, concentration, a resolute indifference to trifles; in short, the habits which may be learnt far better from soldiers than from schoolmen. And for a reason not altogether different, the crowds who were gathered together last week, knowing bitterly that the rivalry which is proclaimed by the professed admirers of peace as the great principle of society, had destroyed society among them, were following no unwise or

unholy instinct when they mourned for a man who had given pledges and proofs that the habits and organization of hosts may be most serviceably applied, without violence or the invasion of personal liberty, to the ordinary occupations of peace.

III. But it is written farther, 'Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.'

If this is to be the blessed issue of the world's history one day, ought we not, we are asked, to be keeping it in sight; to be longing for it; as far as we can, to be taking all steps which may lead to it; certainly not to be moving in the opposite direction; certainly not to be cultivating in the minds of others, or admitting into our own, any tempers or principles which are at variance with it? I do not doubt that all this is demanded of us, that we are wrong whenever we deviate from these rules. The question we should consider must be, what the blessed result is, what will lead to it, what will hinder it.

Observe, then, that when the prophet says '*Nation* shall not lift up sword against *nation*,' he clearly assumes that there shall be distinct nations in the most perfect condition of society which can be conceived of. Any other faith would

have been absolutely intolerable and impossible to a Jewish prophet. The distinctness of his own nation had been the assurance to him that God had chosen him and his fathers, that He Himself was in the midst of them. He longed for a time when each nation should have the same stable ground for its existence, when each should feel that the God of the whole earth was its God. He looked with horror and trembling at those great empires which swallowed up the particular nations, though he regarded them as the divinely-appointed punishers of their idolatries and sins. Nor can this truth of theirs, brethren, ever be changed. There may be abundance of *religion* where there is no national life; but there is no *godliness*. Destroy national characteristics, reduce us merely into one great society, and whether the bond of that society is a pope, or an emperor, or a customs-union, the result is the same. A living God is not feared or believed in; He is not the centre of that combination; His name or the name of a number of Gods may be invoked in it, but His presence is not that which holds its different elements together. Therefore let us be sure that if we would ever see a real family of nations, such as the prophets believed would one day emerge

out of the chaos they saw around them, a family of nations which shall own God as their Father and Christ as their elder Brother, this must come from each nation maintaining its own integrity and unity; this must come from the members of it feeling that they are really fellow-citizens; this must come from their understanding that it is their solemn duty, their duty to God and to each other, not to cast away their swords, not to beat them into ploughshares, while there is any power which would take that from them which has been committed to their trust, and which they can only part with when they part also with their morality and their faith. I trust and believe that if ever our countrymen are called upon to defend their own hearths and homes, they will not be taught by the preachers of the land that they *may* do so because self-preservation is an instinct which justifies almost any acts. So poor and miserable a doctrine, such a mere apology for resistance, never yet inspired any hearts or nerved any arms.

I trust God will enable us to speak a truer language, more in accordance with His word; to say boldly that this is a duty to which God Himself is calling them, which His Spirit will enable them to perform, which it is a sin against Him to

neglect; that not self-preservation, but self-sacrifice, is their work and privilege. For that work let them be animated and prepared by prayers, benedictions, sacraments. And though we are not permitted to hold out the hopes to men with which priests in the middle ages encouraged those who were going to the holy wars, that their sins shall be remitted, and that they shall obtain crowns of glory; though all such arguments would be weak, because they would be dishonest; we may say confidently, that if any men who have been leading a grovelling, self-seeking life, caring nothing for their fellow-men or for God, are moved to become brave and devoted citizens, that is the beginning of a conversion, that is a better and more healthful obedience to the voice of the Divine Spirit, than any self-inflicted penances or tortures could possibly be.

Because, then, it is promised that nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more, and because the only straight, appointed, divine road to the accomplishment of that prediction, so far as we know, is that each nation should seek to be united in itself, and to maintain its own position and freedom, it was

fitting that we should all of us enter heart and soul into the services by which England testified her love for the man who had done perhaps more than any other to keep her a nation, and in which she realized that she is one still. It was fitting that each one should for himself swear upon those relics, invoking a strength which they could not give, that he would in his own calling, according to the light God should give him, strive to strengthen this unity, and to fight in himself and his fellow-citizens against the powers which threaten its dissolution. No man is bound by that oath to adhere to any special opinions of the Duke of Wellington. He is rather bound to acknowledge that there is more power in the life of a man than in all his opinions, and in the opinions of all the parties that divide us. He is bound at the same time to feel that the salvation of a nation does not stand in the life of any man, but in the life of Him who judges among the nations, and rebukes many people.

It may be, brethren—the most evident indications I think prove it must be—that men of this day will need a more direct and explicit faith in His government than our fathers needed, that we

cannot bring forth the same fruits as they brought forth, not even much more unripe fruits, unless we perceive more clearly than they did whence it is that the power of fulfilling every duty comes, who it is that binds the members of a nation to each other, and can only bind together the different nations in that universal body of which He is the Head. If conflicts more serious than those in which the last age took part, serious as they were, are reserved for us, our weakness will require, and God will not deny it, a help which was not vouchsafed to them. But that consideration should increase, not lessen, the affectionate reverence with which we think of them, as well as our own humiliation. If we fall shamefully, it will be amidst examples of the past, treasures of experience, divine encouragements, such as no men ever possessed before. We can only fall through our own pride and littleness, because we think much of the things that are perishable, and are indifferent to those that endure; highly of those which separate classes, poorly of those which belong to all citizens in common; because we are charmed with the list of titles which the herald pronounced over the tomb of the departed warrior, and do not feel the power and mystery that lay in the words, 'this our brother,' which connected

him with the poorest creatures upon earth, and with the whole family for which Christ died, for which He lives to make intercession at the right hand of the Father.

SERMON V.

THE DIVINE INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY.

Preached at St. Martin's Church, May 1851.

REVELATIONS v. 1—7.—*And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back-side, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo! in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne.*

IT is commonly said that this book was a book of prophecy, that St. John wept because none was worthy to understand the future destinies of the Church and of mankind. I cannot doubt

that this interpretation is a true one; but I venture to question whether it expresses the whole truth. We are taught in Scripture to look upon past and future as most intimately connected. The prophets of the Old Testament were not more occupied with one than with the other; they seem to have thought that as much Divine light was needed for the explanation of one as of the other. Things which had happened did not lie more open to the ordinary gazer, than things which were to happen. The facts might be known; the meaning and significance of the facts were hid in the mind of God. He might reveal a portion of His mind to this or that seer; an event, or series of events might be brought out in clearness before one who had long waited and prayed for illumination; when he was finishing his course he might hand on the torch to a successor, who must kindle it afresh for himself at the source of light. Still a deep mystery would hang over the ages past and the ages to come; those who believed God's word would hope for a complete revelation of the meaning and harmony of both.

I cannot help thinking, then, that if the book in the hand of Him who sat upon the throne concerned the future, it must also have concerned the

past—that it must have been the book of God's dealings with His creatures from the beginning of the world to the end. It might refer to a particular tract of time; that tract might extend over a few years, or a great many centuries; but in those years or centuries would be gathered up the difficulties which beset earnest thinkers in one generation or another, with the great practical solution of them. I propose to consider the text to-night from this point of view; I shall not interfere with any theories respecting the construction of the Apocalypse, or respecting the special application of its different portions to times near or distant. It suggests certain great hints for our guidance in tracing the course of God's dispensations, which are equally profitable and even necessary, whatever opinions we hold respecting the accomplishment or non-accomplishment of its predictions. We must take them with us into the study of that which has been, as well as of that which is to be, if we would not, in either, lose sight of Him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

I. Readers do not, in general, dwell much upon the opening of the vision—'I saw a book in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne.' They

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recollect the words—'These things the Father has put in his own power;' they conclude that the book must be one concerning times and seasons which God had not yet been pleased to discover to his creatures; and they hasten to passages which require more skill and dexterity for their elucidation.

But if we think we understand the words ever so well, they are worthy of the most earnest reflection that we can give them. We have need to remember that a vision of history or prophecy must begin with a vision of God; that the ground of all events, of their law, of their knowledge, lies in Himself. We must not be content with the loose phrase that they are ordained by Him, or with the notion that they might have been otherwise if He had so decreed it. We are to recollect that we are speaking of the God of order, of righteousness, and of truth, not of a capricious, self-willed being, who asserts His power by changing the principles of His government. Any one who is weighing the hopes and fears of the universe must start from the belief that there is an absolute Will to all good—an eternal Truth, a living Person—at the foundation of it. When we have fully settled that conviction in our minds, we

have the quietness which is indispensable to the student of history and prophecy; a quietness for which the greatest quickness and subtlety in detecting and following out analogies, and the most extensive and minute learning, are no substitute. A clear eye for observing facts and distinguishing false statements from true, is very precious; but a faith that, whether we can see into the meaning of facts or not, there is a divine meaning in them; —that whether we can sever the right from the wrong, or no, right is fixed, substantial, everlasting; wrong—disturbance, intrusion, distortion;—this faith is the only one which can really give us any encouragement to persevere in seeking for the causes or issues of events. God holds the book in His hands. Instead of making us satisfied to be ignorant of its contents, He inspires us with a passionate desire to understand them. He Himself sets before us the things which He has concealed, that we may search them out.

II. St. John teaches us this in the next passage of his vision: 'I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book and loose the seals of it.' No words can declare more emphatically by whom the desire to investigate the problems of our own lives and

of the world's history is awakened. The temptation to shrink from even the most complicated of these problems comes from an atheistical fear that if we could penetrate to the root of things we should find falsehood, and not truth. The devil prompts that fear; God's angel urges us to seek, even if the search shall only lead to a discovery of our ignorance and impotency.

III. And assuredly this must be the first result of our inquiries. We do not know what darkness covers the course of the world's history, till we begin to seek for light. The farther we advance the thicker and heavier the mists become. St. John, in his hour of wonderful inspiration and revelation, heard the full and terrible truth which has come, in some form or other, at some time of his life, to every student in his solitary chamber: 'No one was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.' At each turn in the labyrinth the searcher finds some new obstruction; promising theories failing when they are brought to the test, new complications making conclusions which had seemed certain, untenable. When natural resources have been tried, he flies, perhaps, to supernatural. He seeks to cut the knot which he could not untie, by resorting to the supposition of a

naked Omnipotence which can dispense with all laws. But out of that thought comes utter anarchy or a reign of chance. Above, around, beneath, all looks hopeless. 'None can loose the seals or open the book.'

IV. There are some who feel little at these discomfitures, or who are scarcely conscious of them. They can obtain a certain knowledge of facts; they can arrive at some general conclusions; phrases about laws of nature, the perplexity of human motives, the progress of the species, stand them in stead of actual discoveries. But one who really cares for his fellow-creatures and longs to find an order in their proceedings, and is haunted by an inward witness that there must be an order in them, is utterly overwhelmed when he finds nothing but irregularity and disorder. Can a righteous God be the author of a universe in which there are such contradictions? But does the student dare, for the sake of keeping his faith, to shut his eyes to facts? Dares he exchange realities for fancies, by taking refuge in hopes of the future from the confusions of the past and the present? Does he seek for some epicurean self-content, indifferent to the storms by which other men are tossed, so long as he can keep himself at peace?

Dares he even fall back upon his confidence in the divine goodness? Does not that goodness become an impalpable abstraction, if God has left the world to be as it is?

Such thoughts have tormented and are tormenting thousands. Often when they utter their doubts, religious men turn away from them with indignation and horror. I believe the apostle's religion would have led him to treat them very differently. He 'wept much because no one was found worthy to open the book.' He entered into the very depths of this despondency, though he had been dwelling in the light of God's presence, and was beholding the spirits about the throne. And because he felt for and with his brethren, the comfort which he and they needed was brought to him.

V. 'And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not; behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book and to loose the seals of it.'

He wept, no doubt, for the *world* over which so dark a mystery hung. But as he never lost—as no true-hearted man ever does lose—his patriotism in his concern for mankind at large, the cloud which was over his own land must have been the heaviest of all upon his heart. He had believed

that in it all the families of the earth were to be blessed; how could he separate its destinies from theirs? The announcement then comes to him in the only way in which it could have brought him consolation. 'The Lion of the tribe of *Judah*' had prevailed to open and interpret the book. Through his nation, light was to come upon the history of all nations.

I cannot doubt, brethren, that the message to him is one to us. We may try hard to decipher the world's records without reverting to the records of the chosen nation. They, we think, are narrow, local, obsolete. We may even hold it a part of religion to say, they are the records of a peculiar people, and therefore not applicable to the condition of other people. But I believe that when we have wept much over the confusions of history, we shall be driven from these arguments. We shall feel how needful it is that the key to the history of all nations should be furnished in the history of one. We shall feel how untrue that history would be, how useless, if it was not local and definite, instead of vague and general. We shall not feel that we are honouring God's purpose in choosing out one race to be a blessing to all others, if we do not believe that He meant its life

to be an illustration of the life of all others—his methods with it a specimen of his methods with all others. Finally, we shall not really acknowledge a Deliverer and Redeemer of mankind, if we do not see the fulness of His love and power unfolding itself through the struggles, experiences, and sorrows of one race, and of the particular men who struggled and sorrowed with it. If we are content to gaze for a while on the Lion of the tribe of Judah, another vision will soon rise out of that —of a Lamb that was slain for all people and nations and languages. Out of that form of strength comes the form of suffering and meekness; out of the national conqueror comes the universal brother. In Him are the horns of strength; in Him are the eyes which draw light from the sun, and carry light into all corners of the earth; from Him go forth the spirits which unite all creatures together, and enable each to put forth its proper strength. It is this Lion of Judah, this Lamb that was slain, who takes the book out of the hand of Him who sits upon the throne. In Him, combining these qualities of power and sacrifice, of nationality and universality, in Him the Lord of Israel, in Him the bond of all society, the ground of each man's distinct personal responsible being,—the apostle

finds the Person who can break the seals which had hidden the course of God's dealings from human beings, who can change the life of the world from a collection of unintelligible fragments into a living whole. Let us endeavour to follow him—for we need a prophet to tell us both the dream and its interpretation, both to arrange the puzzles which present themselves to us in history, and to show us how they may be cleared up—let us try to follow him while He brings before us different distinct visions of forms which have haunted every student, have often made him think that history was a weary maze without a plan, have often tempted him to believe that an evil spirit was directing the course of it.

VI.—1. First we have the vision of a Conqueror. 'And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow, and a crown was given unto him, and he went forth conquering and to conquer.' I do not deny for a moment that some particular person is intended who answers to this description, or that it is a legitimate subject of inquiry who that person is. But whoever he is, the same

general qualities must meet in him which we find in a multitude of others who pass before us in the great pageant of history. The seer represents with great accuracy a whole class of phenomena, though he may have had some one fact or image present to his mind. He recalls to us the feelings which we have all had in reading the lives of the conquerors of the world, feelings which no theories can force us to suppress, and which he does not tell us that we need be ashamed of. The sight of power and of triumph is a goodly sight. Whatever be the use to which it is turned, or the results which finally proceed from it, we are compelled to have a certain sympathy with it. Yet surely it is one of the puzzles in the book of history, that war and conquest should form so conspicuous and capital a part of it, that they should force themselves upon our notice whether we like them or not, though the motives of those who engaged in them seem to be ever so doubtful, and they themselves ever so transitory. It is a seal; we have all felt and owned it to be so; one which we have tried to break, and have not been able. St. John declares that the Lion of the tribe of Judah has broken this seal. One of those four beasts, who represent different aspects of the mind and

character of God, call upon him to come and see it broken. The conqueror with his bow passes rapidly over the stage, as he does in the actual drama of the world. But we have a witness that the power which was given him was from above, however he may have perverted it. Conquest is God's minister, let the instruments of it be what they may; it has its commissioned work and its permanent effects, though the glory which men have sought by it may be only as the dream of a night.

2. Next comes a more appalling spectacle. 'And there went out another horse that was red, and power was given unto him that sat thereon, to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another. And there was given unto him a great sword.' We have here evidently, I think, the picture of civil war, such as might have been raging in the Roman Empire very near the time in which the prophet was writing, such as had convulsed every part of it and ended in the destruction of the Capitol, in the period between the death of Nero and the accession of Vespasian. I merely take that case as an example, not the least assuming it to be the one of which St. John is speaking. I need not remind you that it is but

one out of multitudes of such cases, which ancient and modern history supply. And surely it is one of the seals upon the meaning of both. All the brilliancy of the first vision is wanting to this. The white horse has been changed into the red. There is no crown, but only a sword. You can trace no one purpose, no concentrated ambition, only the strife of factions, with all their infinite meannesses and pettinesses, their hollow alliances, their deliberate cruelty; such scenes as present themselves to us in the war of the sixteenth century in France, or in the war of the seventeenth in Germany.

Historians generally entertain themselves with moralizing about the evils of party-spirit, and the great advantages which would follow if men would cease to indulge it. That is very well. But it does not help to break the seal. The strife continues after we have made our comments. St. John says that the Lion of the tribe of Judah has broken the seal. There is something lying beneath this struggle of factions, as there was beneath those conquests. There is a central peace at the heart of this endless agitation. Through all this war, men are to be taught what the ground of union is. It is not right to wish that they

should be at peace till they find out what that is; peace is only another name for feebleness and falsehood.

3. The next vision is of such a peace. 'And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo! a black horse, and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny, and see that thou hurt not the oil and the wine.' This is that stage in the history of peoples, which the poet speaks of, when they 'change swords for ledgers;' the time when money claims to be king of the world, and when men bow to it and confess it to be the king; a time which many of the wise and great hail as the return of golden days, or as the commencement of a millennium out of which they suppose there must needs come uninterrupted tranquillity to the people of every tongue and clime. But those who see how the oil and the wine become precious above every other good to those who receive the impress of such an age, how unfair the balances are in which the wheat and the barley are weighed, what a time of rivalry and bitter strife it is for very

grovelling prizes, what myriads of bodies and souls perish in that strife; how periods of apparent prosperity may be periods of utter destitution to the multitudes who are the instruments of producing it; how it may be a time which awakens all Tantalus cravings for drops that are never really tasted; how out of it come the greedy lust of the gambler and the poverty which is the fruit of it; those who think seriously of these things, regard this as one of the seals upon the book of history which it is most difficult to break. A mammon tyranny is to them more portentous, more incompatible with any righteous order in the world, than the victories of the most insatiable conqueror, or the most reckless violence of parties. And yet this seal also is declared to have been broken by the Lion of the tribe of Judah. This money power, like every other power in the world, is of God, however it may have been turned to uses which are not His. There is nothing in it which in itself deserves to be hated; it may become an instrument of all the blessings which those who worship it talk of and which they can never realize. The commerce of the earth was surely meant to be a real and effectual bond between the nations. All the works which men would

dedicate to the spirit of selfish rivalry did not proceed from it, but from the true Head of society, against whom it is rebelling, and by whom it shall at last be utterly destroyed.

4. And now comes the spectacle which was preparing for us in that time of seeming quietness and felicity. 'And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked and behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.' There are various calamities brought together in this vision: pestilence, famine, invasion, the beasts of the earth, all indicating, it would seem, an age following one of luxury and effeminacy, when the energies of thought and action have equally decayed; when a people have lost all courage, union, enterprise; when the material enjoyments which have been the reward of their industry and mechanical skill, have eaten up their parents; when the powers of nature come in to avenge the idolatry which has been paid to them; when the oil and the wine that were the great objects of

search and hope fail altogether; when Death claims spirits and bodies both as his prize. An abyss of utter, hopeless darkness lies beyond. Such seasons there have been in the lives of nations and empires; the student of history wonders, as he reads, how they should have lived through them. He is less surprised that races which seem worn and exhausted should sink under the power of some healthier and more vigorous one, than that they should last on, as the lower empire did, for so many centuries, when all life seemed to have forsaken it. This is one of the seals on the book of history which no man can break. St. John says that the Lion of the tribe of Judah has broken it; that in Him, even these conditions of utter prostration and death find their explanation; that He is still bearing up the pillars of the universe when they are most feeble and tottering; nay, that in the most decayed and fallen societies, there are still witnesses of His truth and power, still thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

5. That truth is brought out in the next passage. 'And when He had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice,

saying, How long, O Lord holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them. And it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants and their brethren, which should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.' When we first begin to meditate upon history, this perhaps is the most difficult problem of all: that the best men should be the greatest sufferers, that they should speak and should not be heard, or heard only by a few, who afterwards, perhaps, abuse their names for the support of some faction or the diffusion of some heresy; that if they ever become famous, it is when they become misunderstood; that posterity, even when it seems to approve their sayings, often does them as little justice as their cotemporaries who stoned them and cast out their names as evil. This, I say, seems a seal harder to break than any other; because we might have reconciled ourselves to the punishment of the rest of the world, if we could see these triumphant, if even we could be sure that their memories were so. But when they seem to be mixed up in all the confusion of the world, to partake of it, to be

mastered by it, there is a shadow over the future as well as over the past; it is hard to gather comfort for the one out of the other. Yet no seal has been so thoroughly broken as this. Out of this seeming darkness, there comes a flood of light upon every page of history and upon the whole series of its events. For Christ has broken this, not as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, but as the Lamb that was slain. His own life and death—all the confusions of disciples—the contradictions of sinners against Him—when they are rightly meditated upon, become the keys to this mystery. If He had come to bear witness of Himself, or to seek His own glory, He would not have been reviled or crucified. Because He came to seek his Father's glory, and to redeem the earth for Him, therefore he poured out his soul as a sacrifice. If these saints were seeking their own glory, it would be fitting that they should be understood, appreciated, enthroned. But because they are bearing witness of Him who is faithful and true, because their care is not for their own fame or glory here or hereafter, but that the earth may be redeemed from its oppressors, and made a fit place for Him who is the King of it, therefore it becomes a part of the right order of

things that they should wait, and be content that others should feel the fruit of their labours, which neither they nor others see; and should be guides and helpers, as much by their calamities and errors as by their faithful words and acts, to those that come after them; and should link Heaven and earth together by the cries which proceed from both against the powers of darkness and evil; and should be formed by suffering into a holy fellowship of men who understand, as well as confess, that self-sacrifice is and must be the only ground upon which human society can stand.

6. Which divine and eternal principle is not less manifested, though very differently, in the next vision which St. John saw. 'I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal, and lo! there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fell upon the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-

man, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?'

No one, I believe, has doubted that this is the description of a political earthquake—of what we call, in modern language, a revolution. And surely it is not for us to say that the language of St. John, however rich and gorgeous, is too grand for such an event. Those who have lived within the region of such catastrophes, and have seen all faces gathering blackness, the strong becoming weak, the brave timid, will feel as if even these images, the most perfect which nature or human language could supply, are yet only too weak to represent the confusion of all orders; the upheaving of the surface of things; the opening of the abyss below. Now, though the student of history may have learnt to think of such events as the necessary consequences of diseases long pent up in the body politic; though when they first occur they may seem to him as even blessed disturbances in the monotony of the world, and witnesses that there

is some government over it; yet, when he thinks of all the hateful passions which such periods bring to light, and then of the little compensation which there seems to be for all the crimes they engender,—kings, captives, freemen, bondmen, relapsing into their old conditions, only feeling more jealous and suspicious of each other, more busy in devising securities against each other,—he may well regard these also as some of the puzzling facts in human history, as a seal which he cannot break. How does the apostle tell us it is broken? He speaks of all the terrors which the rulers and great men of the earth experience at such seasons, as testimonies of their conscience that God and the Lamb are come forth to judge them, as cries of deliverance from their wrath. That is to say, those who are living to themselves and to their own glory, who are making self their God, are made to feel and know that self is not the God, that there is no help, or protection, or power, in such a divinity; that all power is really gathered up in a Being whose nature is truth and love, and in Him who gave up Himself for men; that He is really the King of the earth, and always has been; that all the events which occur and have occurred on this earth, are manifestations of His kingdom; that it

must finally triumph over whatever opposes it. This, then, is the real preparation for the complete opening of the book of history and prophecy, the authentic declaration and evidence that all its enigmas have found their solution, and that a truth which is clear and satisfactory for our faith now, will be one day made clear to those who have most interest in disbelieving and denying it.

My object to-night has not been to give you a commentary on the Revelations, but only to inquire what is the Christian method of considering the events of history. I shall not, therefore, pursue the subject any further, though it might receive, I believe, very striking illustration from the record of those trumpets which announce that the city of confusion, the great Babel, which had been set up in mockery of the kingdom of God is fallen down; as well as from the descriptions of the conflicts between the different forms of the evil power and the Word of God, who goes forth with His hosts to overthrow them; and from the vision of the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which cometh forth out of Heaven as a bride adorned for her husband. My main purpose has been to convince you, that if we follow the guidance of the beloved disciple, or rather of Him who

spoke to him and by him, we need not wish to pervert any of the world's records, or to force them to give out some opinions or moral of ours. Read simply, faithfully, without the omission of one dark or troublesome passage, they bear witness to that order which man has been continually violating; they show that no transgressions of his can subvert it or mar it; that the efforts to interrupt it have been the greatest testimonies to its perfection and its might. The facts of ordinary history will confuse us, the interpretations which the Old and New Testaments give us of those facts will confuse us still more, if we look for the great result of God's dealings as the mere triumph of a certain set of persons whom we call saints, and the discomfiture of those who oppose them. For all the facts of history show that the best men have been those who sought their own triumph and glory least, and who felt and cared most for those who disliked and resisted them; and on the other hand, that those who have set themselves up to be the chosen ones of God, and on that account claimed a right to govern the earth, have continually denied and blasphemed His name, have shown that none were less fit than they were to be the chief of all, because none understood so little how to be

the servants of all. And all Scripture teaches us that it must be so, unless Christ's kingdom be altogether different from that which He said it was, or unless He has ceased to be the head of it. The facts of history will confuse us, and the interpretations of Scripture still more, if we maintain that Christ did not claim to be a King when He entered Jerusalem meek and sitting upon an ass; that He did not maintain His kingly rights when He trod the wine-press alone, when He rose from the dead, and when He ascended on high; when He sent down His spirit upon the apostles; when He overthrew the ungodly nation which had refused to be the herald of His mercies to mankind; but that He only is to become a king hereafter in some unknown day. For if the establishment of his universal Church, the overthrow of the Roman Empire, the building up the nations in modern Europe, all the blessings and judgments which have come upon them, all the events which have befallen our own land from the time when we became a nation to this time, be not tokens that He is reigning amongst us, our faith is vain, the Bible has deceived us; neither as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, nor as the Lamb that was slain, has Christ broken the seals and opened the book.

But if we confess Him, as our fathers did, to be in deed and in truth, and not in name, our Lord and King, the Lord and King of our nation, the Lord and King of all nations, then all events which seem most to set at nought His authority or to substitute some other in its place, all convulsions in nations and in churches—the fainting and feebleness of His servants, the falling of standard-bearers, the loss of human helpers and counsellers, the disappearing of the cunning artificer and the eloquent orator, all signs and tokens of adversity—as well as those which are cheering and hopeful—such as the desire of nations to be one, the craving for some common bond of fellowship, the seeking for a centre of unity, when that which pretends to be the centre is proving itself to be the cause of division and strife—will all be heard as different utterances of the same voice, 'Lo! I come quickly.' Oh! that the sorrow and the joy, the mercy and the discipline, may so subdue and soften all our hearts, that we may be ready to join in the answer to that voice, 'Even so come, Lord Jesus.'

NOTE TO SERMON III.

SINCE these Sermons were preached, it has been announced in the newspapers that an Act of the 21st George III., in the opinion of the law officers of the Crown, makes the opening of any places of entertainment on Sunday penal, and therefore forbids the Government to grant the Charter which the directors of the Crystal Palace Company desired. Any one who will be at the pains to read the Act in question, will see that it was passed for the purpose of preventing certain seditious meetings alleged to be held on Sunday evenings for the discussion of texts of Scripture; which texts, it is said, were often debated by 'persons unlearned and incompetent to explain the same.' It is precisely one of those Acts of which religious people among the Methodists and Dissenters might feel reasonably jealous as likely to be twisted—if that were not its original intention—to condemn all meetings which the Government or the Church should choose to represent as having a mischievous tendency. It is one of those Acts which a supporter of the City Missionaries would gladly expunge from the Statute Book, as capable of being strained, in

some evil day, to the hindrance of their benevolent efforts. And it is upon this Statute, so juvenile, yet so mouldy, that the reverence for the divine day—the godliness of the English nation—henceforth must be understood to depend! Surely such a *reductio ad absurdum* of the principle for which worthy and devout men are contending will startle them, and make them think. And it must greatly strengthen the conviction of those who had believed previously that the Fourth Commandment will never be truly regarded, or the blessed institution which it bids us remember, loved, while penalties, enforced by Acts of Charles II. and of George III.,—Acts passed with no moral or Christian purpose at all, to excuse the consciences of the rich, or to provide for some temporary emergency,—are used to help out its divine sanctions.

WORKS

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